







RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN MORLEY.

Thomas C. Jack. London & Edinburgh.

THE  
LIFE AND SPEECHES  
OF  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

BY  
GEORGE BARNETT SMITH,  
AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P."

*WITH GALLERY OF PORTRAITS OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES  
ETCHED BY CHARLES LAURIE.*

VOLUME V.

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his constituents again the feeling of satisfaction was not all on one side. His declaration that he was speaking, not as a member of the Administration, but as a member for Birmingham, was hailed with loud applause; and his incisive sketch of the disastrous effects of the Education Act—in which he touched the crucial question of all—was recognised as a stroke in the right direction, and an indication that those who had believed he would continue faithful to the traditions of his life had not witnessed his career in vain. With the mention of the Twenty-fifth Clause the interest heightened, and the silence grew deeper still. His condemnation of the ‘evil principle’ inherent in the operation of the clause, and his open expression of opinion that that principle ought not to continue, were greeted with rapturous cheers, and the leaders of local Liberal opinion on the subject exchanged gratified smiles. Mr. Bright spoke to restore confidence, but not to make indiscreet confidences, and he did not explain the mode in which, while he professed a full belief that the grievances of Nonconformists could be redressed, he would propose to deal with them. In regard to his alleged—but falsely alleged—share in the Education Act, he made a complete exculpation of himself. He had nothing to do with the measure at the first; he was not able to take part in the debates; and, further, he was so prostrated that it was not even safe for him to follow the course of the educational legislation. But Mr. Bright condemned the Act on the ground that it extended and confirmed the system which it ought to have superseded. It really encouraged denominational education, and it established Boards only where that system did not exist, whereas it should have attempted to establish Boards everywhere, and to bring the denominational schools under their control. The denominational system, in consequence of the parochial organisation of the Church, must be said to be a Church-system; hence the Nonconformists were aggrieved, and justly aggrieved.

Referring to the Geneva arbitration and the settlement of the *Alabama* claims, Mr. Bright replied to those who talked of the treaty of 1872 as though it were a great humiliation to England. The humiliation was not in 1872; it took place between the years

1861 and 1865; and he ventured to say that when the pen of history narrated what had been done with regard to this question, it would say that the treaty, the arbitration, and the conduct of Earl Granville, Mr. Gladstone, and their colleagues, added a nobler chapter to the history of England than if they had filled it with the records of bloody battles.

The right hon. gentleman proceeded to instance matters which were coming to the front and demanding legislation, especially dwelling upon the county franchise and the land question. There were also workmen's questions—the law of conspiracy, molestation, and the Masters and Servants Act. Then there was the Budget, and the question of a free breakfast table—tea, sugar, and coffee. Speaking upon general policy, and referring to Mr. Disraeli's famous Bath letter, which described Liberal policy as 'a career of plundering and blundering,' Mr. Bright said—

'The policy of the Liberal party is known. It is before the public; it is not concealed; it is no mystery. What is the policy of the Opposition? (Laughter, and cries of "None.") We were told the other day that the leader of the Opposition was in "a state of strict seclusion," and but for that strange and unfortunate epistolary outburst we should have had no idea of the desperate state of mind in which he has been. (Laughter and cheers.) But still if we ask for the policy of the Opposition, all is impenetrably dark, and all that we know is that nothing can be known. (Laughter.) No, I beg pardon, I am wrong in that,—we know this, that, according to the Opposition, all the past twenty, and, if you like, all the past forty years, is evil; but as to the future, you will see it when it comes. (Cheers.)

'But let me tell you this—that the great statesmanship which consists in silence and secrecy is not original; it is a mere copy. Thirty or forty years ago,—I recollect the time very well—there was a great fever and mania for speculation. Everybody went into everything, and they generally came out with nothing. I recollect quite well an advertisement of a Great Sunflower Company—(laughter)—and if anybody had proposed so unsubstantial a speculation as the equinoctial line, people would have taken shares in it. Now at that time there was a very ingenious fellow—if I could remember his name I would try to immortalise him. He put out a prospectus. He was what they call a "promoter" of a great company. It was to have great capital, a great number of shares, and great profits. Everything was great about it. It was to work a great invention. It was a great secret—so profound a secret that, until all the money was paid in, nobody was to know what it was. (Laughter.) Now, that is the Conservative policy at this moment. (Cheers.) They have a policy which they offer for the coming elections. It is a profound secret. When you have all given your votes, and returned a Conservative majority, perhaps then they will tell you what it is.' (Laughter and cheers.)

Mr. Bright went on to observe that it was a difficult matter for the Conservatives to get over forty such years of progress as we had had in this country ; and the Liberals were entitled to the merit and glory of the administration and legislation of that remarkable period. He then came to his peroration, as follows :—

‘I have been reading lately a great number of letters which were addressed to me by my dear friend Mr. Cobden during our long friendship, and I have read also a journal consisting of memoranda narrating what took place in Paris when he was there negotiating the Commercial Treaty with France. He had to try to persuade the Emperor Napoleon to follow the example of this country with regard to the reduction of import duties, and the establishment of something like freedom of trade. He told the Emperor how great the benefits had been of the policy of Sir Robert Peel, and how great was the regard and reverence felt for Sir Robert. The Emperor said that he should be charmed and flattered if he could think it possible that he could do things of a kind which would be so good for his country. (Hear, hear.) “But,” he added, “it is very difficult in France. In England you make reforms, in France we make revolutions.” (Hear, hear.) Now, observe, the Emperor was a man who had lived in this country for years ; he had watched the working of public opinion and of our institutions from the retirement of his exile ; and afterwards, for nearly twenty years, he watched them from the lofty stage of the Imperial throne. And that was his judgment ; that was the statement which he made to one of the foremost Englishmen, representing much of English opinion, sent by the English Government to negotiate with him the great Treaty of Commerce. But I believe that there is not a thoughtful statesman in any civilised country in the world who would not join with the Emperor in expressing his admiration of the manner in which the people of this country, for the last forty years, have worked out such substantial reforms in their legislation ; and our own experience brings us to the same conclusion. (Cheers.)

‘Those men are in error who tell you nothing has been done, and that all remains to be done. Those men are not less in error who tell you that what has been done is evil, and that it is evil to do anything more. What you should do is to act upon the principles and rules of past years, steadily advancing in favour of questions which the public has thoroughly discussed, which it thoroughly comprehends, and which Parliament can honestly and conscientiously put into law. For my part, looking back over these forty years, I feel some little sense of comfort. But it does not in the least degree lessen—on the contrary, it rather adds to and strengthens—my hope for the future. (Cheers.) The history of the last forty years of this country, judged fairly—I speak of its legislation—is mainly a history of the conquests of freedom. (Hear, hear.) It will be a grand volume that tells the story ; and your name and mine, if I mistake not, will be found in some of its pages. For me, the final chapter is now writing,—it may be already written—(“No, no,”)—but for you, this great constituency, you have a perpetual youth and a perpetual future. I pray Heaven that in the years to come, when my voice is hushed, you may be granted strength, and moderation, and wisdom to influence the counsels of your country by righteous means, for none other than noble and righteous ends.’ (Loud applause.)

This speech was characterised by all Mr. Bright's former eloquence and vigour. The earnestness and impressiveness of the speaker, with the breadth and loftiness of view which distinguished the oration itself, produced an irresistible and overwhelming effect upon the vast audience.

A correspondent having sought from Mr. Bright an explanation of the term 'free land,' on the 2nd of November, 1873, the right hon. gentleman wrote that 'it means the abolition of the law of primogeniture and the limitation of the system of entails and settlements, so that "life interests" may for the most part be got rid of, and a real ownership substituted for them. It means also that it shall be as easy to buy or sell land as to buy or sell a ship, or at least as easy as it is in Australia and in many or in all of the States of the American Union. It means that no legal encouragement shall be given to great estates and great farms, and that the natural forces of accumulation and dispersion shall have fair play, as they have with regard to ships and shares, and machinery and stock-in-trade and money. It means, too, that while the lawyer shall be well paid for his work, unnecessary work shall not be made for him, involving the enormous tax on all transactions in connection with the purchase and sale of lands and houses. A thorough reform in this matter would complete, with regard to land, the great work accomplished by the Anti-Corn-Law League in 1846. It would give an endless renown to the Minister who made it, and would bless to an incalculable extent all classes connected with and dependent on honest industry.'

For some time before the dissolution of Parliament in January, 1874, the popularity of Mr. Gladstone's Government had been slowly waning. The causes which were responsible for this were very various in character. The Church interest, on account of the disestablishment of the Irish Church, was strongly arrayed against the Ministry; the licensed victuallers were deeply offended by the legislation initiated by the Home Secretary; the Nonconformists were in arms against the important twenty-fifth clause in the Education Act; and many other classes had what they regarded as their special grievances. Besides all this, a general lethargy had crept over the Liberal party, and it had lost that zeal which it previously

exhibited when Mr. Gladstone was carrying his great Irish measures and other reforms. Since the general election in 1868 there had been a large number of bye-elections, and in these contests the Liberals had lost thirty-two seats, while the Conservatives had lost only nine. The Liberal majority had fallen from 116 to about 70.

Under these circumstances, and wearied with the aspect of public affairs, the Premier—who had rendered his name for ever illustrious by the Irish Church and Land Acts, the Education and Ballot Acts, the Abolition of Purchase in the Army, and other measures—decided upon appealing to the country. It had become necessary to see whether the authority confided by the nation to the Liberal party and its leaders in 1868 was still continued to them. Accordingly, on the 24th of January, 1874, Mr. Gladstone issued a manifesto to the electors of Greenwich, announcing the immediate dissolution of Parliament. After reviewing the work of his Government, and glancing at the condition of the country, the Prime Minister made some references to the revenue for the current year, announcing that he expected a surplus of £5,000,000. With this sum in hand he was able to point to the total repeal of the Income-tax, which he declared to be practicable. Mr. Disraeli replied to his rival's challenge by an address to the electors of Buckinghamshire, in which he complained of Mr. Gladstone's 'prolix narrative.' He asked the electors to return him to the House of Commons, to resist every proposal which should tend to impair the strength of England, and to support by every means her imperial sway.

Parliament was dissolved on the 26th of January, and the elections were held immediately.

Mr. Bright issued the following address to the electors of Birmingham: 'The Parliament elected in the year 1868 is about to be dissolved, and it will be your duty to select your representatives for the Parliament which is to succeed it. I have had the great honour of being one of your members for the period of sixteen years, and, except during a time of ill-health, I have endeavoured to perform the duties of my office with industry and fidelity. Very recently I addressed you in a published letter, and also at great length in a public speech. It is not, therefore, now necessary that I should enter

into detail as to the past, or as to what I hope for in the future. The circumstances which have caused the dissolution of Parliament have been explained in the address which the First Minister has issued to the electors of Greenwich. It will be a great gratification to me, if, through your favour, I am enabled to take part in the wise policy indicated in that address. If arrangements are made for the Liberal candidates to attend a meeting of electors before the day of nomination or of poll, I hope to be able to be present and to take part in the proceedings.' The other Liberal candidates were Messrs. P. H. Muntz and George Dixon. Mr. Gilliver, a working-man's candidate, was brought forward in opposition to the sitting members, and his appearance was followed by that of Mr. S. Gedge, a Tory candidate, but both withdrew before the day of election.

The nomination took place on the 30th of January, and the old members, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz, were returned without opposition. On the following day there was a great meeting in the Town Hall, when the members addressed their constituents.

Mr. Bright, who was received with much enthusiasm, again spoke with his old fire and energy. After some introductory observations, he said: 'As you stand by the grave of the dead Parliament, I am sure, whether you speak its funeral oration or you write its epitaph, you will be willing to say that it is one of the best and the noblest of the Parliaments whose doings have made the story of English history during many centuries past.' This observation was received with loud applause; and the speaker, eliciting in turn the cheers and laughter of his audience, continued as follows: 'But our opponents do not agree with us; they are an unhappy party. Whether in or out, they seem to me alike 'unfortunate. I have watched their agonies for thirty years. During that time, according to them, the constitution has received some scores of serious wounds, and several of those wounds, though it is curious to say so, have been pronounced fatal. They say that we—that is, the Liberal party—have disturbed "classes and interests unnecessarily, that we have harassed almost all sorts of people, and have made ourselves very unpopular thereby. I doubt not that if they had been in the Wilderness, they would have condemned the Ten Commandments as a

harassing piece of legislation, though it does happen that we have the evidence of more than thirty centuries to the wisdom and usefulness of those Commandments. Well, I plead guilty to the charge that we have disturbed a good many classes and a good many interests; but then, in pleading that, I offer as the justification that in no single case have we injured a class or interest, and in every case we have greatly benefited the country.' Mr. Bright then traced the history of the so-called disturbance process, beginning with Lord Grey and the Reform Bill of forty years ago. Having referred to the various great measures which the Tories said would ruin the country, the right hon. gentleman concluded as follows: 'For some years I have done little but look on. There have been errors which I have disapproved and have condemned; but if the Government has made errors—and no Government has lasted for five years that has not—I say that, looking on it with impartiality, its virtues amount to far greater measure than its errors. It was my expectation within the last year that when there came this dissolution—and it was not expected so soon—it was my expectation that I should have at that time to write, not an address offering myself as a candidate, but an address of farewell and final thanks. I did not think it was likely that I should ever again be able to take my place upon this platform to address you thus, or to speak in the House of Commons. But I could not at this moment—it was impossible at such a juncture to take any other course than that which I have taken in offering myself again to you, if you chose to elect me. And though I am not strong to labour as I have been in past years, yet still possibly I may do something to promote the great interests of our country, and to guard the precious fruits of the many victories that we have won.'

Mr. Dixon and Mr. Muntz having also addressed the meeting, Mr. Jaffray moved the following resolution: 'That this meeting desires to express its great satisfaction at the unopposed return to Parliament of its three old and faithful members, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz; and, recognising in this great triumph a proof of the undiminished vigour and unity of the Liberal party in Birmingham, trusts it will stimulate the cause of advanced Liberalism



throughout the country.' The resolution was seconded by Mr. R. W. Dale, and supported by Mr. George Dawson, who dwelt upon the strength of Birmingham Radicalism, which had the biggest heads, the heaviest purses, and the wisest men of the town upon its side. The resolution was carried unanimously, and with warm demonstrations of applause.

Although a defeat was in store for the Liberal party generally throughout the country, Birmingham proved itself one of the boroughs—perhaps the leading constituency—which remained most firmly true to its old traditions.

The result of the general election was practically known by the middle of February. The Liberals sustained severe losses, and there was a majority of slightly over fifty for the Conservative party. On the 17th of February Mr. Gladstone tendered his resignation, and that of Mr. Bright and his other colleagues, to Her Majesty at Windsor. On the following day Mr. Disraeli was summoned by the Queen, and entrusted with the seals of office as Premier.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*MR. BRIGHT ON THE EASTERN QUESTION.*

The Eastern Question in 1875-76.—Insurrection in Turkish Provinces.—The Bulgarian Atrocities.—Mr. Gladstone's Pamphlet.—English Proposals to the Porte.—Meeting at the Manchester Reform Club.—Speech by Mr. Bright.—Mr. Disraeli's Address at Aylesbury.—The Constantinople Conference.—Great Speech by Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Lord Salisbury's Policy.—National Conference on the Eastern Question.—Failure of the Constantinople Conference.—Russia declares War against Turkey in April, 1877.—Mr. Bright at Bradford.—Address on Affairs in the East.—Neutrality.—England and the European Concert.—Unfounded Jealousy of Russia.—Progress of the War.—Turkey desires the Mediation of the Powers.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Protest against War.—Retirement of Lords Derby and Carnarvon from the Ministry.—Debate on the Vote of Credit.—Treaty of Peace signed at San Stefano.—Despatch of Indian Troops to Malta.—War Excitement in England—Anti-war Conference and Demonstration at Manchester.—Vigorous Speech by Mr. Bright.—Strong condemnation of Lord Beaconsfield's Policy.—European Congress in July, 1878.—Conclusion of the Berlin Treaty.



THE Eastern Question, which for many years has been a continual source of difficulty to English and European statesmen, again assumed a complicated character in 1875. In May of that year insurrectionary movements broke out in Bosnia and the Herzegovina. The war with Turkey progressed with varying fortunes, and on the 14th of December the Sultan issued a decree ordering administrative reforms. This, however, was not deemed sufficient, and on the 31st of January, 1876, a note was presented to the Turkish Government by the united Governments of Austro-Hungary, Germany, and Russia, insisting upon wide and substantial reforms in the general administration of the Ottoman Empire. On the 23d of February the Sultan issued a second decree, ordering the

immediate execution of large administrative reforms. The insurrection spread into Bulgaria, however, and Turkish affairs were in a very disorganised condition. In July a joint declaration of war against the Ottoman Government was made by Servia and Montenegro. On the 31st of August, Murad V., who had been proclaimed Sultan after the deposition of Abdul Aziz, was himself deposed, and Abdul Hamid II. was installed as his successor.

In consequence of the terrible events which were occurring in Bulgaria, on the 6th of September Mr. Gladstone published his pamphlet entitled 'Bulgarian Horrors.' It passed through almost countless editions, and created a great sensation. Its author also enunciated his views at a meeting of his constituents on Blackheath, denouncing the Turkish governing body as incapable of reform, and proposing their expulsion, 'bag and baggage,' from Europe. In a speech made at Aylesbury, Lord Beaconsfield admitted that the Ministerial policy upon the Eastern Question was unpopular. He admired, he said, the enthusiasm and the sympathy which prompted the cry for vengeance, but he strongly condemned 'the designing politicians who take advantage of such sublime sentiments, and apply them for the furtherance of their sinister ends.' Sir Henry Elliot, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, demanded on behalf of our Government the punishment of those who had been guilty of the atrocities in Bulgaria; and he was also instructed to propose as a basis for peace negotiations 'administrative autonomy' in the Herzegovina and Bosnia, and guarantees against maladministration in Bulgaria.

At this juncture, namely, on the 2d of October, a crowded meeting of members of the Manchester Reform Club assembled, at the invitation of Mr. B. Armitage, the president, to meet Mr. Bright, who had consented to address them on public affairs. Many members of Parliament and other influential persons were present. The event possessed something of historical interest, for it was now seen that Mr. Bright, who had been rejected at Manchester in consequence of the hostile attitude he assumed upon the Crimean war, was as popular as ever in this great constituency. As Mr. Armitage said, the separation came of a political aberration, for which penance had been done.

The country having lost faith in the regeneration of Turkey, Mr. Bright was in the position of a prophet whose prophecies had come true. In commencing his speech he adverted slightly to domestic matters, and then plunged into the question of the hour. He did not spare the authors of the Crimean war. He dwelt with emphasis on 'the mistakes—I had almost said the crimes—of twenty years ago.' The difference he found between the Liberal leaders and the Tory leaders in regard to the policy of the past was that the former had learned something since that time, and the latter had learned nothing. The Crimean war was a mistake, and the country had made up its mind that such a mistake should not be repeated. The people of England 'have found out, too, that the idea that Russia was likely, if she got possession of Constantinople, to make her way to India and overthrow English power in that country, was a phantom that had really nothing in it; and I think they have found out also that the danger of the possession of a free passage through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles by Russia was one which England need not be afraid of.' With regard to some of the recent events, Mr. Bright affirmed that 'the only persons in this country who have been able to close their eyes and their ears are Her Majesty's Ministers.' They had shown themselves virtually pro-Turk, and the time had come when our negotiations on this Eastern Question must be framed upon new lines, with fresh principles, and with a better policy. Having described the rising of the Christians in some of the Turkish provinces, the speaker declared amid applause that it had been followed by 'another rising, and an important one—the rising of the people of England.' As to our future policy, 'Let us lead; I have no objection if we can lead in a policy of mercy and freedom. Let us dissolve partnership with a power which curses every land that is subject to it. One of our poets has said, and said truly—

" Byzantines boast that on the clod,  
Where once their Sultan's horse has trod,  
Grows neither grass, nor shrub, nor tree."

There is no doubt whatever that desolation and ruin are lasting

memorials of the Moslem power on the once fertile shores of the Mediterranean.'

Dealing, in conclusion, with Mr. Disraeli's speech at Aylesbury, and the demand for an autumn session, Mr. Bright observed—

'I say that the speech delivered the other day at Aylesbury was a speech of defiance to the people of England, a speech heartless and cruel as respects Servia and Bulgaria. (Hear, hear.) There is a demand for an autumn session. I believe nobody is more opposed to an autumn session than a member of Parliament is—(laughter); but though it is full of inconvenience, still the demand for it seems to me at this time constitutional and wise. Ministers are at variance, and the Prime Minister in his speech defies the country. If there was a dissolution now, what would happen? I suspect the Ministers would fear it greatly. They would be swept off the boards, and in their place a new policy and a new Ministry would be installed. I think the chief who made that speech—a speech which I deeply regret, and I think by this time he must also have regretted it—would by that public opinion be swept from his pride of place and from his place of power. Let him meet Parliament, or let him meet the constituencies; I am not afraid of what would be the decision of the country. (Cheers.) We regret, the country regrets, our past policy with regard to the Turkish question. We regret, the country regrets, the sacrifices of the Crimean War. We are not now anxious to go to war to defend the Turk, and we are not called upon and do not intend to go to war to defend the enemies of the Turk. We are at a long distance from that part of the world. It is no business of ours to be sending ships and troops nearly three thousand miles to effect territorial changes in which we have no real and no direct interest. If we left it to the course of nature—nature as explained to us by historic facts—the question would no doubt some way settle itself. But if we had a Parliament, or a dissolution and a general election, the policy of England would in my opinion be declared; and I freely state to you my judgment that we should have this solemn and irrevocable decision on the part of the people of this country—that the blood and the treasure of England shall never again be wasted on behalf of the Turk—(cheers)—that the vote of our Government, the vote of England in the Parliament of Europe, shall be given in favour of justice and freedom to Christian and Moslem alike—(cheers)—and that the Ottoman power shall be left hereafter to the fate which Providence has decreed to corruption, tyranny, and wrong.' (Great cheering.)

In a letter to a correspondent, Mr. Bright also advocated an autumn session of Parliament, and it was generally believed that had such a step been taken at this time, it would have resulted in a disastrous defeat of the Government. But Lord Beaconsfield did not dissolve Parliament, and as events wore on they operated favourably rather than otherwise to the continuance and popularity of his Government.

On the 1st of November Turkey agreed to an armistice of six weeks, and on the following day the Emperor Alexander gave our ambassador at St. Petersburg, Lord A. Loftus, the most solemn assurances that he had no designs upon Constantinople. Speaking at Moscow on the 10th, with a knowledge of Lord Beaconsfield's utterances at the Ministerial banquet at the Mansion House on the preceding day, the Czar said that if Russia could not obtain such guarantees as were necessary for carrying out what she had a right to demand from the Porte, she was prepared to act independently. A Conference was now called at Constantinople of special representatives of the six great European Powers, for the purpose of settling the affairs of the Ottoman Empire; and the Marquis of Salisbury was nominated the Queen's Special Ambassador at this Conference.

While the Marquis was upon his travels, Mr. Bright delivered a great speech to his constituents at Birmingham, on the 4th of December. The meeting was convened by the Liberal Association for the purpose of expressing an opinion upon the Eastern policy of the Government; and a resolution was carried calling upon the Government to unite with Russia and the other great powers in securing the independence of the Christian provinces of European Turkey. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Muntz, the other members for the borough, were also present.

Mr. Bright briefly recapitulated the principal events of the past year, and inquired why war was considered imminent, when every Government in Europe was in favour of peace. The answer was, because England was determined, by means of Turkey, to keep the Russian ships of war out of the Mediterranean. He ridiculed the idea of there being any danger to English interests in the presence of a Russian navy in that sea. The vessels of other nations were permitted there, and the skies would not fall if Russia was admitted. She was excluded by frost from passing from the Baltic during half the year, and throughout the whole year, from passing the Dardanelles, because Turkey held the keys for England. If England were in such a position, the unanimous voice of the nation would claim the right for her vessels to enter the Mediterranean. He urged that

Great Britain should join Russia in urging reforms upon Turkey; and if she could not do that, let her stand aside. 'There can be no arbitration,' he said, 'unless the parties to the dispute are willing; there can be no arbitration between such a Government as that which reigns in Constantinople, and the suffering people of whom we have lately heard so much. I only take consolation in the fact, during all these tremendous scenes of suffering—

"That God from evil still educes good;  
 Sublime events are rushing to their birth;  
 Lo! tyrants by their victims are withstood,  
 And Freedom's seed still grows, though steeped in blood."

Let us hope, let us pray, that the efforts that are being made, as sincerely by the Emperor of Russia as by the Government of this country, may be crowned with success, and that the storm which has been created, and which threatened to rage around us, may be put an end to, and that tranquillity may again speedily prevail'

Referring to the Conference, and to our Special Ambassador to Constantinople, Mr. Bright remarked—

'Lord Salisbury is a man against whom a good deal may be said, and a good deal may be honestly said in his favour; perhaps that is true of most of us—(laughter); but with regard to his policy at home I think I have observed in it for many years—and I have watched and sat opposite to him for years in the House of Commons—what I should call a haughty unwisdom that was unfortunate and mischievous. On the other hand, I have seen in his conduct as Minister for India great liberality, and a great disposition to do that which he believed to be just. I can only hope that he leaves the unwisdom for home consumption—(laughter)—and that when he arrives in Constantinople his liberality and his justice will have fair play. I hope that he will do his country the highest service, and himself the highest honour, by the duty which he has undertaken. But now, the Special Ambassador has been to Paris, to Berlin, to Vienna, and to Rome; he has seen the Duc Decazes, he has seen Prince Bismarck, he has seen Count Andrassy, he has seen Signor Melegari at Rome; he has heard what they have had to say. If he has been touting for allies and sympathisers, I expect that by this time he knows he has really failed to find them. (Hear, hear.) If he will act upon his own strong sense, it may do us great good; if he acts as the subservient representative of his chief—(groans and hisses)—judging his chief by his own language, then I think he may do us very serious ill.'

Conferences, Mr. Bright reminded his hearers, had not always ended in peace. Alluding to the Premier's boast at the Guildhall as

to how many campaigns England could bear before she was exhausted, he described it as greatly out of place. Cheers and laughter followed the observation that 'the Prime Minister may be a great actor, but somehow or other it seems to me as though he always played to the gallery.' Mr. Bright then quoted M. Guizot, Lord Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, and Mr. Cobden in support of his own views on the Crimean war. There was nothing in the whole political pamphlet literature of the country to compare with the pamphlets which Mr. Cobden had written more than thirty years before. One of these, on 'Russia, Turkey, and England,' was being reprinted. There could be nothing so helpful and useful to read at the present time. 'The lover of freedom,' said the right hon. gentleman in conclusion, 'always looks to us; the oppressed everywhere turn their eyes to ask for sympathy and for help from us. They feel that they make this claim upon a free people. We not only do not deny that claim, but we freely acknowledge it. Well, then, I will put to you a solemn question—a question which you must answer, and you must answer it to your children—to your posterity: Shall the might of England again be put forth to sustain such a tyranny as that which rules in Constantinople—a tyranny which has dried up realms to deserts; a tyranny which throughout all its wide range and influence, has blasted for centuries past with its withering breath all that is lovely and beautiful in nature, and all that is noble and exalted in man? I ask you, Mr. Chairman, I ask this meeting of my countrymen, I ask every man in the three kingdoms—and in this case may I not ask every woman—what will be the answer given to this question?—and I dare undertake to say there can be only one universal answer from the generous heart of the English people.'

The entire audience responded enthusiastically to Mr. Bright's appeal.

On the 8th of December, a National Conference on the Eastern Question was held in St. James's Hall. The Duke of Westminster presided at the afternoon meeting, and the Earl of Shaftesbury in the evening. The speakers at the meetings included Mr. Gladstone, Sir G. Campbell, Mr. Anthony Trollope, Mr. Evelyn Ashley, Canon



Liddon, Sir H. Havelock, Mr. Trevelyan, Professor Fawcett, and Mr. Freeman. An expression used by the last-named gentleman subsequently excited much comment. 'Will you fight for the integrity and independence of the empire of Sodom?' he asked. 'Perish the interests of England, perish our dominions in India, sooner than that we should strike one blow or speak one word on behalf of the wrong against the right.' Mr. Thomas Carlyle wrote a letter to the originators of the Conference, expressing his high admiration for the Russian national character and policy, and his belief that the expulsion of the Turk from Europe, though a somewhat drastic remedy, was yet the only hopeful one.

The Constantinople Conference was held in due course, but its sittings proved abortive. On the 20th of January, 1877, the final meeting was held, when the representatives of the Great Powers declared that they must decline further intercourse with the Ottoman Government, the latter having rejected all proposals, even after their reduction to the lowest demands. In the following April Russia formally declared war against Turkey, and the conflict between the two Powers now began.

On the 25th of July, 1877, Mr. Bright unveiled the Cobden statue at Bradford; and in the evening the opportunity was taken of presenting him with an address in St. George's Hall. Reference was made in the address to some of the measures with which the right hon. gentleman's name was associated, and it was observed that 'although a great change had taken place in public opinion since the Crimean war, British interests and a spirited foreign policy are made in some quarters still the shadowy and dangerous pretext for departing from a strict and wise neutrality.' The address was read by Mr. Titus Salt.

The reply of Mr. Bright was confined almost exclusively to the Eastern Question. Having sketched our vast empire, he showed how great must be our interest in the cause of peace. If we are at war, nearly half the world is at war, for England cannot go to war but every territory over which England rules is necessarily also at war with, for the time, the enemy of England. Yet there was always a war party, and it was found in the press constantly, as well

as in Parliament. He asked his hearers to examine the two policies—the war policy and the peace policy. We escaped the war against Austria in 1859, and we also avoided war in the critical year following. In 1864, we ran imminent risk of being engaged in the war between Germany and Denmark. We took no part in the Austro-German war of 1866, and we also avoided being dragged into the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. There was a war party in England during the time of the civil war in the United States; and if we had taken the side of the South, as we were urged by some to do, the American Republic would have been filled with a bitter hostility against this country for generations. He asked with regard to all these cases in which we had avoided war, ‘Is there one single man in the United Kingdom outside Bedlam, and I doubt if there be one inside it, who regrets the course of neutrality which the people and the Government of the United Kingdom pursued?’ But in 1853, when Turkey declared war against Russia, we pursued a different course. If war had been averted then, three-quarters of a million of men would have been saved from death, two or three hundred millions of treasure would not have been wasted, and in all probability we should have avoided the vast increase of the armies of the Continent which took place as the immediate consequence of that war. It was a grand line that Milton wrote in one of his grand sonnets when he said,

‘But what can war but endless war still breed?’

and that war had bred indescribable loss and suffering to several of the nations of Europe.

At that time, continued Mr. Bright, there was great jealousy of Russia; and now in our own time the old influence had appeared again. The old peril had come round again, and we had to confront it in the best way possible. The Turk had been brought to trial by the Constantinople Conference. The verdict went against him, but there was no result, for there was no European concert. The course pursued by England, as represented by her Government, made European concert absolutely impossible. If we were not willing to enforce the verdict, we might at any rate have stood aside and left

Turkey to her fate. Russia had now undertaken to enforce the verdict; and assuming that the Conference was wise and its verdict righteous, it seemed only in accordance with reason and with logic that somebody should enforce it. Russia stepped forward to defend the Christian populations, and to put down evils and disturbances and oppressions which had become intolerable in the sight of all Europe. Because of that 'ghastly phantom, the balance of power,' the English Government now said that Russia must not approach Constantinople. Yet, surely, to occupy the capital city of an empire or kingdom at war was the speediest mode of bringing that war to a conclusion.

Having given several illustrations of the evil effects of the balance-of-power theory, Mr. Bright replied to the argument that the Russian fleet coming from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean would not be very far off the Suez Canal, and might interfere with the trading traffic and the military traffic between this country and our dependencies in India. There was no more reason to believe that Russia would interfere with the Canal than that France would interfere with it. The Russians had not invaded the east coast of England from the Baltic. There was no country in Europe that, until these vile suspicions were aroused, was more disposed to a perpetual amity with England than the great Empire of Russia. He believed with regard to the Suez Canal that it was in more risk from the Turk than anybody else; and all Europe would gladly enter into any kind of reasonable compact to guarantee its improvement, its being widened, and its being kept perpetually open for all the mercantile and other navies of the globe. He believed also that all nations, ourselves excepted, would be quite willing to see the straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean just as freely opened. When they considered the disadvantageous position of Russia, it was one of the most unjust ideas, and one of the very wildest of unstatesmanlike notions, that England could perpetually forbid a nation of 80,000,000 of people to find that access to the main ocean which the Creator of the world made equally for all His people upon the globe.

As to the course then being pursued, Mr. Bright said that while

Lord Salisbury was endeavouring to bring the Turk to make concessions, the war party in England was speaking with another voice, stimulating and encouraging the Turk to resist, and it had brought him to that catastrophe in which he found himself. The sending of the fleet to Besika Bay, and other acts, showed that the English Government either did not fully understand the effects of their own acts, or that they behaved in a manner showing almost no confidence in the public opinion of their country. The records of the Stock Exchange proved this, and our merchants and manufacturers, and others, had a right to call upon the Government for a distinct enunciation of their policy. The Government no doubt had many difficulties to contend with, but they might at least have tamed down what he would call the rowdy organs of their press.

Neutrality, Mr. Bright urged, was the true and wise policy for this country. 'Five years hence, if this matter be settled, and we do not interfere, we shall all be delighted that we did not interfere. Five years hence, if we do interfere, we shall lament for the dead whose blood has been sacrificed, for the treasure that has been wasted, for the added discord which we have brought to Europe, and, it may be, for the humiliation of our statesmanship and our military operations that we may have to undertake. Let us then, I say, turning to our foreign policy, be as wise as we are endeavouring to be with our home policy. Let us try to be courteous to all nations, just to all nations—as far as we can, getting rid of the jealousies that have disturbed us; let us believe that whether it be the United States on the other side of the Atlantic, or whether it be the great Empire of Russia in the east of Europe, that there are good, and great, and noble men in those countries; that there is no disposition whatever—as I believe there is none—to make quarrels with this country, and to do evil of any kind to us. Then, great as our nation is, with its power apparent in every quarter of the globe, great will be its influence for good; and though the world moves on slowly—far too slowly for our ardent hopes—to its brighter day, history will declare with impartial voice that Britain, casting off her ancient errors, led the grand procession of the nations in the path of civilization and of peace.'

The fortunes of war went disastrously against the Turks ; and after the surrender of Plevna, on the 10th of December, a circular note was addressed by the Porte to the Great Powers, requesting mediation.

On the 13th of January, 1878, Mr. Bright addressed his constituents at Birmingham. In consequence of the session of Parliament beginning at an unusually early period, this date had been fixed for the usual visit of the members for the borough.

Mr. Bright's speech was again almost exclusively confined to the Eastern Question. He remarked that the early summoning of Parliament, which in ordinary circumstances would be viewed with indifference, was now regarded with anxiety and alarm. There was no doubt that the country during the recess had been strongly agitated, and that the question upon which it had been disturbed was that of peace or war. He believed it would be criminal for the Ministry to involve this country in war. Experience had taught us that for the past two centuries all our wars, and the bloodshed, the loss of life they had entailed, had been undertaken for the pursuit of some ghastly phantom or some cunning phrase. He trusted that the nation would not allow itself to embark again in war for a mere phrase, such as 'British interests,' and he held with Lord Derby that the greatest of British interests was that of peace. The right hon. gentleman pointed out that everything we obtained by the Crimean war was given up the moment the next European complication arose. The conclusion of his speech, in which he enforced these points, was as follows :—

'It is a painful and terrible thing to think how easy it is to stir up a nation to war. Take up any decent history of this country, from the time of William III. until now—for two centuries, or nearly so,—and you will find that wars are always supported by a class of arguments which, after the war is over, the people find were arguments they should not have listened to. It is just so now, for unfortunately, there still remains the disposition to be excited on these questions. Some poet, I forget which it is, has said,

"Religion, freedom, vengeance, what you will,  
A word's enough to raise mankind to kill ;  
Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread,  
That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed."

"Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread," like the cunning phrase of

“the balance of power,” which has been described as the ghastly phantom that the Government of this country has been pursuing for two centuries, and has not yet overtaken. (Hear, hear.) Some cunning phrase like that we have now of “British interests.” Lord Derby said the wisest thing that has been uttered by any member of this Administration during the discussions on this war, when he said that the greatest of British interests is peace. (Cheers.) And a hundred, far more than a hundred, public meetings have lately said the same; and millions of households of men and women have thought the same. To-night we shall say “Amen” to this wise declaration. (Cheers.) I am delighted to see this grand meeting in this noble Town Hall. This building is consecrated to peace and to freedom. You are here in your thousands, representing the countless multitudes outside. May we not to-night join our voices in this resolution, that, so far as we are concerned, the sanguinary record of the history of our country shall be closed; that we will open a new page, on which shall henceforth be inscribed only the blessed message of mercy and of peace?’ (Loud cheers.)

Public feeling was intensified shortly afterwards by the resignation of the Earl of Derby and the Earl of Carnarvon—the two members of the Ministry who were known to be most strongly opposed to a war policy. At the close of January, the Government asked for a vote of credit, in view of the eventualities of war, when Mr. Bright complained of our entering the European Conference with ‘shotted guns and revolvers.’ Mr. Forster moved an amendment to the Ministerial proposition as follows: ‘That this House, having been informed in Her Majesty’s gracious speech that the conditions on which Her Majesty’s neutrality is founded had not been infringed by either belligerent engaged in the war in the east of Europe, and having since received no information sufficient to justify a departure from the policy of neutrality and peace, sees no reason for adding to the burdens of the people by voting unnecessary supplies.’

The debate lasted for five nights. Mr. Bright spoke on the first night to a crowded House. At the outset he declared that he did not intend to make any attack upon the Government, though they had within the last few months been guilty of much indecision, and had committed many blunders. But they had had much provocation from some of their own supporters, and it was at least to their credit that they had not been led away by the raving lunacy of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, or by what, if he might be pardoned for the alliteration, he would call the *delirium tremens* of the *Daily Telegraph*.

Mr. Bright caused considerable amusement by his description of the delegates of the Sultan, who, he said, were 'scarcely to be found.' Their Government had telegraphed to them, and they had received no answer, although they had communicated with their wives—that being, Mr. Bright added in a parenthetical sentence, a Government which they seemed to comprehend. He deprecated the unworthy suspicion of Russia, and urged the Government not to throw their sword into the scale at a time the combatants appeared to be about to sheathe theirs. 'I would declare this,' he continued,—'the Government of this country ought to declare it—the time is not far distant, I believe, when they will declare it—I think it is now pretty much the mind of the people of England—that we have no interest in any longer taking any step whatever to maintain the Ottoman rule in Europe; that we have no interest in cherishing a perpetual animosity against Russia. There are two policies before us—the old policy, which, if we leave it to our children, will be a legacy of future wars; the new policy, which I contend for, and which I preach, and which if we adopt we shall leave to our country, not a legacy of war, but a legacy of peace, and a growing and lasting friendship with one of the greatest empires of the globe.'

Sir Wilfrid Lawson introduced, in the course of a speech which he made during this debate, the burden of a popular music-hall song, that resulted in fixing the name of 'Jingo' upon the war party—

'We don't want to fight; but, by Jingo, if we do,  
We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too.

Mr. Lowe made merry over 'the vote of credit and the confidence trick,' and said that the Prime Minister generally took pains to show that his opinion was at variance with that of the majority of the people. He suggested a simple remedy for the present difficulties—'Muzzle your Prime Minister.' Mr. Bourke and Mr. Hardy supported the vote in animated speeches, Sir W. Harcourt remarking of the latter that he had shown the volcanic force of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo in full flame. In the end, Mr. Forster's amendment was withdrawn, and the House decided to go into committee by 295 votes to 96—many of the Opposition, Mr. Bright amongst the

number, refraining from voting. Other discussions took place, but the vote of credit was eventually agreed to.

On the 3rd of March, a treaty of peace between Russia and Turkey was signed at San Stefano, and this was ratified at St. Petersburg on the 17th.

Great uneasiness, however, still continued to prevail in England in consequence of the attitude of the Government, and an order issued for the despatch of Indian troops to Malta caused great excitement. The bye-elections at this period showed that the Ministerial policy was losing favour. Meetings and conferences were held all over the country; and at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, Mr. Gladstone was presented with an address, signed by four hundred Dissenting ministers, strongly deprecating the war with Russia with which the country was menaced.

At Manchester, on the 30th of April, a great Conference, composed of fifteen hundred delegates from cities, towns, and various organisations, assembled to protest against the impending war with Russia. Resolutions were passed strongly condemning the Government, and demanding a Congress, or a reference of the whole quarrel to a friendly Power.

Mr. Bright presided at a great demonstration held in the evening at the Free Trade Hall. He spoke with remarkable energy and vigour. They were met, he said, at a time of great peril and anxiety. When told that the Government were acting strenuously for peace, for his part he had very little sympathy with efforts on behalf of peace which naturally led to war. The right hon. gentleman went on to review the conduct of the Government in spending the six millions recklessly, after the Commons had been assured that they would probably not be spent at all. He blamed them for having determined on a policy which neither Lord Derby nor Lord Carnarvon could endure, though the former must have suffered terribly in separating himself from Lord Beaconsfield; for representing that the fleet had been sent into the Sea of Marmora for the protection of British interests, when it was now acknowledged that it was sent there as a menace; for declaring before Parliament adjourned that nothing was about to happen, when they were about to



import thousands of Mahometan soldiers to fight against the Christian nation of Russia ; and for neglecting the House of Commons, which 'either dare not ask for information, or when it asks is denied.' The English Government was the only obstacle to the Congress. The 'British interests' dodge had been dropped, and we were to go to war for European law, which outside these islands nobody understood. The Premier was the only real disturber of the nation, and his object was to restore Turkey, to sustain 'that terrible oppression, that multitudinous crime which we call the Ottoman Government.' England must not repeat the error of the Crimean war.

The prospect of Turkey suffering at the hands of Russia, said Mr. Bright, was said to present a danger through which England's interests might suffer. And on this 'perhaps,' a remote and imaginary evil, we were to go to war. 'It recalls to my mind a passage in one of our poets. He says,

" On this *perhaps*—  
This peradventure, infamous for lies,  
We build our mountain hopes, spin our eternal schemes."

If we had Mr. Hardy's policy and that of his Government, I fear we should rush into that enormous, that incalculable crime, for which language has no word but one which conceals its meaning—but a crime which involves a multitudinous murder, the shedding of torrents of blood over many of the fairest regions of the globe. I ask you here—it may not be worth while to ask any Conservative here or outside : there must be Conservatives so called who vote for Conservative candidates, who have, I trust, some idea beyond that of the mere superiority or success of party—there must surely be Conservatives, as there are any number of Liberals, who consider great national interests and great truths to be superior to the demands of party ; and I ask them whether they will be led in this career and to this terrible catastrophe by a Minister—for I hold that I am not describing the policy of the country—I am not even describing the policy of Parliament—I may not even be describing the secret wished-for policy of the whole of the Cabinet ; I am

describing, as far as I can gather it, the policy of a Minister—a Minister who for forty years has never yet been known of his freewill, or from an earnest and liberal mind, to say or do anything for the advance of any of those great measures of good and of freedom which have distinguished the legislation of this country.'

This spirited attack on Lord Beaconsfield elicited prolonged cheering from the audience. Resuming, Mr. Bright said that his consolation and hope was that the love of justice, of mercy, and of peace was not dead in the minds of Englishmen. 'I wish that it may grow and may strengthen from day to day; and that, growing and strengthening, it may baffle a policy which is hateful in the sight of Heaven, which to my mind is profoundly wicked, and which I feel certain beyond all possibility of doubt is a policy which is hostile to, and may, if persisted in, be fatal to the greatest and highest interests of the empire.' In responding subsequently to a vote of thanks, Mr. Bright, again alluding to the proposed war upon the Christian population of Russia, said with great emphasis, 'For no such cause as this shall the torrents of English blood be called to flow which are apparently now on the point of being shed, at the command—I will say to the people, at the betrayal—of a Minister who has not one single drop of English blood in his veins.'

This was the last of Mr. Bright's important addresses upon the Eastern question. With the subsequent history of that question the reader is doubtless familiar. All that it is necessary, therefore, to say here is, that the war-fever in England, thanks to the energetic efforts of those who were opposed to the anti-Russian policy of the Government, gradually subsided. On the 13th of July, 1878, the Berlin Congress assembled, the representatives being Prince Bismarck, Prince Gortschakoff, Alexander Carathéodori, Lord Beaconsfield, the Marquis of Salisbury, Count Andrassy, M. Waddington, and Count Corti. A treaty was drawn up which provided, amongst other things, for the independency of Montenegro, Servia, and Roumania, the constitution of Bulgaria as an autonomous principality, the formation of the new province of Eastern Roumelia,

the occupation and administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary, and the cession of Ardahan, Kars, and Batoum to Russia. The treaty was signed and ratified on the 3rd of August. With the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty, that question which had cost Europe many costly and sanguinary wars was once more temporarily settled.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND CORRESPONDENCE—1867-79.—DEATH OF MRS. BRIGHT.*

Mr. Bright's Addresses in the Provinces.—Mr. Jacob Bright's Return for Manchester.—Political Retrospect by Mr. Bright.—Speech at Birmingham on Education and Government Aid.—Mr. Bright receives the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh.—His Address on that Occasion.—Elected Honorary Member of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce.—Important Speech in the Corn Exchange.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham in January, 1875.—The Government and the Church.—The Efforts to Suppress Ritualism.—The Public Worship Bill.—Tribute to Mr. Gladstone.—Mr. Bright on the Liberal Defeat of 1874.—On Political Questions in the Year 1875.—The Direct Representation of Labour.—The Gothenburg System of Public-house Management.—Social Progress.—Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—A Stirring Week.—Mr. Bright on Household Suffrage for the Counties.—Speech at Bradford on Free Trade.—Opening of the New Town Hall at Manchester.—Mr. Bright on the Cotton Trade and Indian Administration.—Address at Rochdale on Science and Art.—On Liberal and Conservative Legislation.—On the Work of Sunday Schools.—Letter on Protection in America.—Correspondence on Public Questions.—Great Speech at Birmingham on Foreign Affairs.—The Eastern Question.—Egypt.—The War in Afghanistan.—The Government Strongly Condemned.—Mr. Bright on Protectionism in England.—On the Depression in Trade.—Canadian Policy.—Waning Popularity of the Beaconsfield Administration.—Conservative Demonstration at Manchester in October, 1879.—Great Counter-Demonstration by the Liberals.—Animated Speech by Mr. Bright.—Scathing Denunciation of the Government.—Mr. Bright on Education.—The Progress of the United States.—Death of Mrs. Bright.



E propose in this chapter to deal with a series of important addresses by Mr. Bright, all of which were delivered outside the House of Commons, and at many of the chief towns in the provinces—Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford, &c. The period embraced is a very interesting one, both in regard to social progress and the rapid development of popular principles in connection with Parliamentary Reform, Irish

legislation, and other great subjects. These addresses are, moreover, not only very valuable for the side-lights which they throw upon the 'burning questions' of the time, but for their exposition of those ideas of Mr. Bright which have for a generation past been bearing fruit in the shape of practical legislation.

The first of these addresses was delivered at Rochdale on the 23rd of December, 1867. On the 26th of the preceding month there had been an election for the city of Manchester, when Mr. Jacob Bright was returned by the large majority of 1,850 votes over Alderman Bennett. The numbers were—Bright, 8,260 ; Bennett, 6,409. A third candidate, Mr. Mitchell Henry, had practically withdrawn. The numbers polled for the successful Liberal candidate were larger than had ever been recorded at a contest in Manchester before. Although Mr. Bennett received the support of the Conservatives, his proposer disclaimed the idea that the candidate himself was a Conservative. The meeting held at Rochdale was called for the purpose of welcoming Mr. Jacob Bright after his election.

Beginning by congratulating his brother, and also the city of Manchester, on the recovery of its rightful position as regards the Liberal party, Mr. Bright went on to speak of the work of the Liberals. Madame de Staël had defined happiness as constant occupation for a desirable object, and with a sense of continual progress. Politically speaking, therefore, Liberals were amongst the happiest of mortals, for they had constant occupation with a sense of continual progress. The Tories were unhappily in a very different position. They had had constant employment, for during the last twenty-five years the Liberals had found them a great deal to do, but they had no desirable end in view, nor had they aided in any continual progress. Mr. Bright illustrated this by the attitude and action of the Tories at three memorable periods, 1832, 1846, and 1867. Mr. Mill had said the Tory party were naturally the stupid party ; and unless they were so stupid that they could not easily feel, the retrospect must be exceedingly humiliating to them, and the future equally gloomy. But their last humiliation on Reform appeared to him to be the deepest of all. Lord Derby had always been regarded as the most faithful of Tories, though the proprietor

of a Tory journal had once said to Mr. Bright that his lordship was not a thoroughbred Tory, he was only a 'broken-hair'd 'un.' From his career he was apparently a man to be trusted by his party; but if it were not melancholy, there could hardly be anything more amusing than the transformation scene which had just taken place in Parliament.

Amid great cheering, Mr. Bright went on to say: 'Even now, the insolence which Lord Derby has sometimes manifested in his speeches, the invective of Mr. Disraeli, the scurrilous vituperation of the Tory press—all this, poured upon me and others for years, has now been proved to be entirely a mistake. In point of fact, it is discovered in the year 1867—and I think it ought to be chronicled with other great discoveries of the century, certainly of the year—that my principles all along have been entirely constitutional, and my course perfectly patriotic. It has been found this year that the man who alone was considered faithful to his party has hauled down his flag.' The right hon. gentleman proceeded to remark, that when we had a satisfactory distribution of seats and the machinery of the ballot, we should have a really democratic and popular House of Commons. When Lord Derby and his party acceded to office, they did not propose a Reform measure because they liked it, but to keep the party together, and to prevent their opponents from ejecting them from office.

'Their conduct in the pursuit of office reminds me of some lines which were published a good many years ago, and which never had a more exact application than when they describe the course of the Tory party last year. The poet in the *Rejected Addresses* says—

"So when dogs'-meat re-echoes thro' the street,  
Rush sympathetic dogs from their retreat,  
Beam with bright blaze their supplicating eyes,  
Sink their hind-legs, ascend their joyful cries;  
Then, wild with hope, or maddening to prevail,  
Points the quick ear, and wags the expectant tail."

(Loud laughter.) Just so the gentlemen of the front Opposition benches, and such of them behind who thought that there was something to be had, were sure to act. Especially, and above all, was it the case with the lawyers, who have since been gorged with patronage, and for the sake of that patronage and plunder, which in India is called loot, formed a combination to overthrow the bill of 1866. To place themselves in office, and to keep themselves there, they consented to pass a bill

infinitely worse on all the points for which they condemned the bill of 1866. I venture to say their conduct on this occasion leads to the conclusion that there is scarcely any institution of the country, however honourable and ancient, that they would not sell for the permanent possession of office. (Cheers.) . . . . To crown the whole thing, we have seen Lord Derby, the last defender of Protection, the last and firmest bulwark against democracy,—we have seen him exhibiting himself in defence of free trade and household suffrage on the platform of the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. Notwithstanding this, I suppose that our friends the Tories will still have faith, for their credulity is without limit, and still believe in him—they must believe in somebody,—and that Lord Derby will stand as a sort of saint in the political calendar of the Conservative party.’ (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright next observed that the work of Reform was not yet completed; they must have what he had already mentioned—Redistribution and the Ballot. Then there was the question of Ireland to settle, which had remained unsettled for two hundred years. If the English Government had been a Government of statesmen, things could never have come to their present terrible pass. Ireland might have been tranquil, and the kingdom might long ago have been united. ‘If Ireland is to be made content, if her wounds are to be healed, if there is to be henceforth what there never yet has been—a united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland,—if the sceptre of the Queen, representing the majesty of the law, shall ever be of equal authority east and west of the Channel, this must be done, and this can only be done, by measures of great statesmanship and of justice. The morals of the turf, whether adopted on the floor of Parliament or in the secrecy of the Cabinet, will fail here. The disease which we are discussing is one of a different character. There are remedies, unless it be that the remedies are too late. Has this country fallen so low that it can produce no statesman equal to these things? I say the man who, leading the counsels of the Queen’s Government, shall grasp this great question and conclude it—who shall comprehend the remedies, shall administer them, and shall make them law—will do that which in future time the pen of history will delight to trace. He will to the very full gratify the noblest ambition of his mind, and he will build up for himself a lasting memorial in the happiness and the gratitude of a regenerated nation.’

On the 5th of February, 1868, Mr. Bright attended a breakfast

given by Mr. J. S. Wright, the Chairman of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, to the artisans who had, at the instance of the Society of Arts, visited the Paris Exhibition. The Mayor of Birmingham presided. In the course of the proceedings, some of the speakers expressed their alarm at the risks which they believed English manufacturers were running from the rivalry of foreigners, and they urged that Government should give assistance, by public grants, to technical education. Mr. Bright said he had always predicted that with a fair representation of the people there would come a demand for national education, and his prediction had been verified, for there was an excitement on the subject greater than had existed in any previous time. He was afraid he should have to throw a little cold water upon some of the things that were being advocated, but he did not believe in everything being done by the Government. He would not ask Government, either by grants or by rates, to do anything for public education except for that class of the people who were in deplorable ignorance. The mass of the labouring population was not in a satisfactory condition as regards education—it was beneath the same class in Prussia, Switzerland, and America. All above this class had ample means of educating their own children, and there was no necessity to apply to Government for them. With regard to technical education, those specially gifted must naturally become the leaders in the various arts and manufactures, and in his opinion it would not be necessary to have much of what was called technical training for particular trades. There had been little of strict technical education in the United States, and yet no nation in the world had surpassed them in the progress made in manufacturing intelligence. This was because there was no class of the people that was not sufficiently educated to be able to read and to comprehend and to think ; and this was the foundation of all subsequent progress. In the United States there was not a great and idle class on the one hand, and a great poor and depressed class on the other. Mr. Bright maintained that if we were to establish throughout the country a system of primary education, simple but sound, and give to the people the power to read and to think, we should lay a broad and great foundation from which would arise almost all else that we want.



Mr. Cobden had said that the Prussians were the Yankees of Europe, and from their education he believed they would be the most powerful nation in Europe, because they had to a very large extent followed the system of universal education existing in the United States. There was no occasion to go to Government for art and trade museums for such towns as Birmingham, Manchester, and Sheffield. Having worked as they had worked in Birmingham for the last hundred years in building up the town and its industry, it was monstrous to say there was not public spirit enough and wealth enough to procure for Birmingham anything necessary to teach manufactures and art, and that particular kind of technical instruction required. With regard to the subject of education generally, he thought that in endeavouring to extend the means of education for the people, they should go on rather with a steady wisdom than with such a precipitate and feverish action as might raise great difficulties in the path. He hoped that by this means they would come to the time when every boy and girl would receive a sound education.

The freedom of the city of Edinburgh was presented to Mr. Bright on the 3rd of November, 1868. The Lord Provost, Mr. W. Chambers, the well-known educational publisher, made the presentation, and in doing so referred to the necessity of supplementing Parliamentary Reform by the promotion of a comprehensive scheme of national education, without which all other blessings were nugatory.

After remarking upon the great value which he put upon such a presentation, as a mark of approbation of his public conduct from the most intelligent and renowned city in the United Kingdom, Mr. Bright disclaimed being an orator except in the sense in which Milton described true eloquence, as nothing but the serious and hearty love of truth. Nor had he any desire to be considered a statesman, for he had seen much of intrigue, and ambition, and selfishness in the characters of many so-called statesmen. He had been content to describe himself as a simple citizen, who honestly examined such public questions as affected the public weal, and honestly offered his counsels to his countrymen. Referring to the exertions he had made in company with Mr. Cobden for the repeal

of the Corn Laws, he said : ' When I look back to him whose name must ever be foremost in any history or memory of that struggle—when I consider his remarkable industry, his wonderful sagacity, his enlarged information, the combined force and gentleness of his character, his most persuasive speech—when I look back upon his transcendent merits—I confess that I am amazed that it took all that, and the energy, and the labour, and the resolution of hundreds and thousands besides, to repeal the Corn Laws. I say I am amazed that on so clear a question it should be necessary to make so great an effort to bring Parliament and the people to comprehend their true interests.' Upon questions of statesmanship he remarked, ' I am one of those who have never believed that there is anything very mysterious in the art or knowledge of politics ; I believe that, with regard to what we call statesmanship—honest statesmanship—it is not an abstruse and a difficult branch of knowledge ; and that if, when we come to consider a public question, we were able to strip it of all the things that do not really belong to it, and to get at the pith and kernel of the matter, our intellects are so much on a par, and that as a whole we are so anxious to act honestly and rightly, that nearly on all occasions we should be able to come to an early and a wise agreement as to the course which the public should pursue.'

On the question of the Russian war, Mr. Bright remarked, ' I always said that no country justice—and there are some of them who are not very particular—(laughter)—would send any man to gaol for three months on evidence such as the people of England—I beg pardon of a gentleman in Glasgow who writes to me on the subject—I mean the people of Great Britain and Ireland—had for that unhappy struggle. The result was that 250,000 men died or were killed in the course of that conflict ; that hundreds of millions of treasure created by the nations engaged were squandered ; that the armaments all over Europe and in this country have been maintained at a higher rate ever since ; that we in this country have found our military armaments increasing by £10,000,000 a year, and £10,000,000 in twenty years comes to £200,000,000, besides the sum spent in the war itself. And after all this we find that there is still a great Eastern question, that Russia is stronger than ever, for

Russia has manumitted her serfs, and that Turkey is not stronger, but weaker, from the efforts made to save her.'

In reference to education, Mr. Bright clearly indicated his opinion that the question of religious teaching should not be mixed up with it. The Reform question, he said, could not be allowed to remain where it was, and the Irish question, including the land, must be dealt with. Touching upon the freedom of the press, Mr. Bright said that a free press was just as necessary for political liberty as free air for our natural lives; and he thus concluded his address: 'The century in which we live, the middle of which we have passed, is one that has been remarkable for the eventfulness of its changes, and so it will be regarded in all future time. There is a great battle going on at this moment, and, without exaggeration, we may say that it is a battle with confused noise, although it is not a battle which the prophet described as "with garments rolled in blood." There is a confused noise throughout the country, from John O'Groat's to Land's-end. All over Great Britain and over Ireland men are discussing high questions—questions which are to affect the unity of the empire, our own condition, the condition of the posterity that are to follow us, and to colour all the narratives of the future historians of this kingdom. Let us then in this battle of discussion bear our part; let us avoid heat and passion as much as we can; let us strip from all these subjects that which does not belong to them; let us grasp with all our might the true meaning of them; and let us honestly endeavour to find a true solution for whatever difficulties beset the path of the nation. I am thankful beyond what I can express, when I review my political life, that I have been permitted to bear some part in changes the results of which will act, I trust, beneficially for ever.'

On the 3rd of November Mr. Bright was elected an honorary member of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. Mr. George Harrison, Chairman of the Chamber, congratulated Mr. Bright on being thus elected, and stated that he was only the third person upon whom this distinction had been conferred. His predecessors were Sir John Sinclair, the well-known political economist of the last century, and Mr. Gladstone, of the present. Mr. Bright, in acknow-

ledging the honour done to him, spoke at some length. The chief feature of his speech was the recommendation that the Chamber should take part in an agitation for the repeal of the taxes on tea and sugar. The cry he would raise would be 'An untaxed breakfast table.'

In the evening Mr. Bright received addresses from the Trades Delegates and the Reform League at the Corn Exchange. The great building was crammed, and many persons to whom tickets had been sold could not obtain admission. The ladies' gallery was splendidly occupied, and the compact crowd occupying the ground floor and south platform formed an animated and imposing spectacle. Mr. Grant Duff, M.P., occupied the chair; and, besides many distinguished persons connected with the city and the university, the following members of Parliament were present: Mr. James Moncreiff, Lord William Hay, Sir Robert Anstruther, Mr. R. Dalglish, the Hon. Waldegrave Leslie, Mr. Duncan Maclaren, and Mr. Miller.

Mr. Bright, who was received with enthusiasm, the entire audience standing and cheering, spoke for rather more than an hour, dwelling mainly upon the land question, and the questions of national expenditure and national education. The speech was one of his best efforts. The exordium was a brief but comprehensive sketch of how the Tories, who had opposed any lowering of the franchise, had consented to household suffrage. Englishmen were standing on the threshold of a new career, for the power which had hitherto ruled over us was shifted. 'The fate of this great nation is in the nation's hands; come weal, come woe, the responsibility of the future must rest with the mass of the people; for they are now admitted, at least within the boroughs, to a large share of representation, and thereby of political power.' Mr. Bright observed that the working men could not now say they were overridden by a class. They could exert their strength, and it was for them to exert it for good. There were some matters still to be adjusted, and prominent amongst these was the question of the ballot. He replied to Mr. Stuart Mill's argument in comparing the free and open exercise of the ballot to the duty of a judge in a court of justice, which is open to the public eye. If,

instead of stopping at the Bench, said Mr. Bright, Mr. Mill had gone into the jury-room, he would have found that the jury, which is just as important in this country in a trial as the judge, does sit apart from the public eye ; and more than that, that it is considered a gross violation of confidence if any juryman should convey to the public a knowledge of what has occurred in the jury-room. Looking at the condition of the constituencies in Ireland, in Wales, and in the United Kingdom generally, he was forced to the conclusion that the ballot was absolutely indispensable and necessary to secure order as well as liberty.

Perfect religious equality in Ireland was the next point insisted upon by Mr. Bright, and from this he passed on to the great and necessary reform in the land system. Before long it would be the duty of the people of England and of Parliament to remove from the statute-book what was called the law of primogeniture. On the question of public expenditure he spoke very strongly. 'I quoted a passage yesterday from perhaps the foremost name in English political history—John Milton—and I may now quote another. He describes these charges for war as draining the veins of the body to supply ulcers ; and so from your veins, from the sweat of your brows, from the skill of your brains and the industry of your hands, from that which you have worked for to furnish your houses, to clothe your families, to supply their wants—from all these this £26,000,000 is gathered up, not once in a hundred years, but every year, to support the army and navy, to maintain and keep up a policy which we have utterly abandoned. The third great question upon which the enlarged electorate should make itself heard was that of national education, and he warmly advocated a thorough system of education apart altogether from religious teaching. Mr. Bright closed his address with this passage, which is amongst the most striking and eloquent of his perorations :—

'Since I have taken a part in public affairs, the fact of the vast weight of the poverty and ignorance that exists at the bottom of the social scale has been a burden on my mind, and is so now. I have always hoped that the policy which I have advocated, and which has been accepted in principle—(applause)—will tend gradually but greatly to relieve the pauperism and the suffering which we still see among the

working classes of society. I have no notion of a country being called prosperous and happy, or of being in a satisfactory state, when such a condition of things exists. You may have an historical monarchy, decked out in the dazzling splendour of royalty; you may have an ancient nobility, settled in grand mansions and on great estates; you may have an ecclesiastical hierarchy, hiding with its worldly pomp that religion whose first virtue is humility—(cheers); but, notwithstanding all this, the whole fabric may be rotten, and doomed ultimately to fall, if the great mass of the people on whom it is supported is poor, and suffering, and degraded. (Loud cheers.)

‘Is there no remedy for this state of things? If Government were just, if taxes were moderate and equitably imposed, if land were free, if schools were as prominent institutions in our landscapes and in our great towns as prisons and workhouses are, I suspect that we should find the people gradually gaining more self-respect; that they would have much more hope of improvement for themselves and their families, that they would rise above, in thousands of cases, all temptations to intemperance, and that they would become generally—I say almost universally—more virtuous and more like what the subjects of a free State ought to be. (Applause.) The solemn question as to the future condition of a considerable portion of the labouring classes in this country cannot be neglected. It must be known and remedied. It is the work upon which the new electoral body and the new Parliament will have to enter. It is a long way from Belgrave Square to Bethnal Green. It is not pleasant to contrast the palatial mansions of the rich and the dismal hovels of the poor, the profuse and costly luxuries of the wealthy with the squalid and hopeless misery of some millions of those who are below them. But I ask you, as I ask myself a thousand times, is it not possible that this mass of suffering and poverty may be reached and be raised, or taught to raise itself? (Hear, hear.) What is there that man cannot do if he tries? The other day he descended to the mysterious depths of the ocean, and with an iron hand sought, and found, and grasped, and brought up to the surface the lost cable, and with it made two worlds into one. (Loud cheers.) I ask, are his conquests confined to the realms of science? Is it not possible that another hand, not of iron, but of Christian justice and kindness, may be let down to moral depths even deeper than the cable fathoms, to raise up from thence the sons and daughters of misery, and the multitude who are ready to perish? (Applause.) This is the great problem that is now before us. It is one which is not for statesmen only, not for preachers of the Gospel only,—it is one which every man in the nation should attempt to solve. The nation is now in power; and if wisdom abide with power, the generation to follow may behold the glorious day of which we, in our time, with our best endeavours, can only hope to see the earliest dawn.’ (Great cheering.)

The members for Birmingham, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz, addressed a great meeting of their constituents in Bingley Hall on the 25th of January, 1875. The usual resolution of confidence was opposed, so far as Mr. Muntz was concerned, by the Good Templars and their allies. An amendment was moved, but the speakers could not be heard, and when the vote was taken, a shout of ‘cheers and

derisive laughter greeted the feeble support which the amendment received. The vote of confidence was then put and carried by an overwhelming majority.

Mr. Bright spoke at considerable length. Referring to the accession of the Conservatives to power, he said he had been asked, as an old stager in Parliamentary matters, how he thought the new Government would get on, and he answered they would get on for a good while pretty well if they would keep off politics. But it was not easy to do this; for while recently on the shores of the Pentland Firth, he had seen from the papers that the Duke of Richmond and the Lord Chancellor in one House, and the Prime Minister in the other, had been engaged in applying a match to every bit of gunpowder they found in their way. First of all, they dealt with the Church of Scotland, and they had raised something like a new and great question in Scotland. There was every likelihood that, in the future elections for Scotland, the question of disestablishment would come up as a great and main question before almost every constituency in that kingdom. Then there was the English bill, introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was nourished and cherished by the Lord Chancellor and Lord Shaftesbury. In the House of Commons it was even more popular than in the Lords. Now he never knew the House of Commons unanimous and enthusiastic about a thing except at a time when it did not know what it was doing and where it was going. He had known it thus twice enthusiastic and almost unanimous—once when Lord John Russell brought in his Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, which everybody now wished to forget, and again upon the declaration of war with Russia, which many now believed was a very unpatriotic and evil thing. As to the Archbishop's bill, the Premier tacked himself to the Archbishop's apron, and the bill passed the House. It was charged against some thousands of the clergy of the Church of England that their conduct was lawless, and that they required to be curbed. Things, then, had come to a very serious pass, when men upon whose consecrated heads the hands of the bishop had been placed should require special legislation to punish or to curb them. Now in a great body like the Church of England there

must always be considerable divergence of opinion ; yet one of the great arguments in favour of the Established Church was that it repressed all zeal which tended to disorder ; and not only repressed zeal, but that it was a bulwark against that Church from which our fathers separated three hundred years ago. There was much anger over this zeal creeping into the Church. 'It crept into the Scotch Church about thirty years ago. At that time the fermentation was so violent that the hoops of the hogshead gave way, and the staves tumbled together, and there was an immeasurable quantity of sound ecclesiastical liquor lost. The very same thing is now happening, to a certain extent, in the Church of England.' Sir William Harcourt had suggested that we could turn out those men who did not conform, and we could put others in their places who would obey—he did not say their consciences or the law of God—but the national faith. 'I doubt if he will find it very easy to procure pious and earnest and learned men to take these offices on the kind of terms which he offers in this language that I have quoted. I think he must have forgotten somewhat the rock from which he was hewn, and he must be thinking more of the profession to which he is now attached.' It was quite true that the Government did order what should be the uniform of the Truth, but their Acts of Parliament could not touch the hearts and reason and consciences of men. They might rely upon it that, with a vast number of the clergy of the Church of England, any attempt to bind them down in a sort of strait-waistcoat of this kind, though it might appear to have a temporary success, must ultimately and wholly fail. Zeal would not for all time sacrifice freedom, even to keep the emoluments and dignities of a 'State Church. He was not defending the new manners, the new practices, and the new opinions ; he had no sympathy with them whatsoever ; but he was endeavouring to show that the course which the Government had entered upon was a perilous course.

Mr. Bright next referred to a case, which had just caused considerable excitement—that wherein the Bishop of Lincoln had refused to allow the word 'reverend' to be inscribed on the tombstone of a Wesleyan minister ; and he asked whether if it were



wrong to find so much fault with those outside the Church, it might not be well and wise to try to arrest the mischief which was so obviously spreading inside. There was strife between the clergy and the bishops, and there was also great discord between the bishops themselves. A colonial bishop—Bishop Colenso—had been forbidden to occupy a pulpit in Oxford to which he had been invited by a brother clergyman; but although the bishop of the diocese could prevent the appearance of Dr. Colenso, he could not prevent his sermon from being read from his friend's pulpit. The colonial bishop had further been invited to preach in Westminster Abbey, but not wishing to promote disorder, he had declined the invitation. Such grievances as these had suggested the bill of last year. But the Public Worship Bill was mere trifling. It made no alteration in the law. It did not decide what was the law. It simply provided a new court to which aggrieved parishioners might go. It might deal with the question of the light that comes from the candles, but it could not deal with the question of the light which came from the eloquence, the earnestness and power, and godly sincerity of the man who preaches. The fact was that the State Church, as we had it now, was not and could not be in harmony with the age. Politically it had rendered no service, and as a religious institution they found that the excessive emoluments at one end of the scale, and the scanty and inadequate remuneration at the other, were altogether a disgrace to a great national institution. Promotion, too, in the Church was promotion through interest and importunity. There were also the evils connected with patronage. It was not from the Wesleyans, Congregationalists, and Baptists that complaints were made of a certain percentage of ministers and people going over to Rome; it was only from the hierarchical and prelatial Church that converts were continually made.

Referring to the Church Defence Association, on whose behalf Lord Dartmouth had recently presided at a meeting, and to a meeting of licensed victuallers presided over by Mr. Wadhams, Mr. Bright said: 'Mr. Wadhams and his friends take exactly the same course that Lord Dartmouth and his friends take. They are very petulant, they are very bad-tempered, and they are apt to call names.

They say that the Temperance people want to ruin all the publicans, and it is a dreadful thing that some should propose—which is, perhaps, the next probable assault—that public-houses should be shut up on Sunday. These two bodies—Lord Dartmouth and his friends, and Mr. Wadhams and his friends—are in possession each of them of a monopoly.' Now he did not recommend that meeting, or any constituency, that they should pledge their candidates to vote for the abolition of the Established Church. That question had not come near the front yet. It was one of the gravest questions a people ever had to consider.

Mr. Bright next proceeded to pay a high-toned and sympathetic tribute to Mr. Gladstone, who had temporarily abandoned the position of leader of the Liberal party. 'They who have seen him,' he remarked, 'for very many years in the House of Commons as I have—they who have sat with him, and seen him in the counsels of the Cabinet—they only are able justly to estimate the magnitude of the loss which the House of Commons and the country have sustained by his withdrawal. I will say nothing in answer to ungenerous things that have been said of him. Of this I am well aware, that Mr. Gladstone, like an old and a noble Roman, can be content with deserving the praises of his country, even though some of his countrymen should deny them to him.' In conclusion, Mr. Bright said that he did not ask his hearers to plunge into a violent agitation for the overthrow of the Established Church of England. It would be a great calamity if such a change should come through the turmoil of a great revolution. He only asked them to consider this question, which was the greatest of our time.

Mr. Dixon and Mr. Muntz subsequently spoke; and Mr. R. W. Dale moved a vote of regret at Mr. Gladstone's retirement, which was heartily and unanimously carried.

On the 28th of January, the Birmingham Liberal Association gave a *conversazione* in the Town Hall—in celebration of Mr. Bright's visit to the town—to the Committee of Four Hundred, the Ward Committees, and their friends. Mr. J. S. Wright presided, and there were about one thousand persons present. Mr. Bright addressed the gathering, dwelling chiefly upon the causes which he

believed had led to the Liberal reverses of 1874. He first explained the constitution of the Liberal Association of Birmingham known as the Four Hundred, which was perfect as a representation of the whole community of the town—that is, of the Liberal party. Everything that was of a public character was political in Birmingham. The municipality enclosed within itself the great spirit of the Liberal party in the town; and in the School Board elections they had had a signal and memorable triumph. Elsewhere, said Mr. Bright, things had been different; and people were demanding an explanation of the causes of the defeat. First, there was the question of legislation in regard to public-houses, which no doubt had a very serious influence. There had been a combination of the closest character for the purpose of sacrificing every public question, and every honourable consideration for the public good, to the low and sordid interest of the worst class of publicans in the country. A very considerable proportion of the majority obtained by the present Government was directly obtained from this combination. Another cause of defeat was this—the divisions which existed, and the absolutely childish policy that was pursued in many parts of the country, in many constituencies, by sections or fragments of the Liberal party. The Temperance men, and a variety of other persons, had pursued their one idea or crotchet. Measures could never be carried by such tactics. At least a dozen boroughs had been lost at the last election by this mode of conduct; and assuming the publicans to be the cause of losing an equal number of votes, they would find whence came nearly the whole of the majority of the Government. Then there was another great cause of failure; the Liberals had made too sure, and had assumed that the power of the Tories was gone for ever, forgetting that the land and the Church were on their side. Then, too, there was timidity on the part of the wealthy, as well as the enormous lying indulged in against Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues during the whole time that they were in office. The American poet, Mr. Bryant, in his beautiful address to Liberty, said, ‘Thou must never rest, for thine enemy never sleeps;’ and this was advice which the Liberals of England must remember. Reformers could not yet afford to rest on their oars.

Mr. Bright went on to remark that Birmingham was more intelligent, better informed, and more mentally alive on political questions than any other great town in the kingdom; and if its superior organisation were adopted elsewhere, it would take a very short time indeed to recover the losses sustained at the last election. With reference to the question of labour representatives in Parliament, Mr. Bright said that to have a Parliament composed of two classes would be one of the greatest calamities that could happen in our representative system. That was his view, though the principle might be honestly held by others. He instanced all the great reformers of various kinds in his own time—Lord John Russell, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Hume, Mr. Charles Villiers, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Ricardo, and Mr. Milner Gibson—not one of whom was selected to represent particular classes. For himself, too, who had served alongside these men, he was by no means what would be called a working man. He called, in conclusion, for intelligent union amongst all classes of the Liberal party throughout the country, as well as earnest and combined work. To create a working-men's section in the House would destroy the unity of party, and subject themselves infallibly to the superior tactics of their opponents.

The three members for Birmingham again addressed their constituents on the 22nd of January, 1876, the Mayor (now Mr. Chamberlain, M.P.) presiding. The Town Hall was crowded, and the meeting was very enthusiastic. Upon a resolution of confidence being proposed, two amendments were moved—one having reference to the members' views upon labour representation, and the other relating to their action with regard to the Tichborne claimant. These amendments received but little support, and the vote of confidence was carried by an immense majority.

Mr. Bright spoke at some length, and was received with much enthusiasm, though his remarks were now and then interrupted by a section of trade unionists present, who were in favour of 'direct labour representation.' The right hon. gentleman spoke of the past session as 'a session of small measures,' and of the recess as a period of great discussion upon those measures. He asked to be

excused from speaking of the loss of the *Vanguard*, the fugitive slave circular, and 'the great Stock Exchange transaction in which the Government has been concerned.' Upon the second of these, however, he said, 'That question is not so entirely easy as many of our friends have supposed; but the question which has always presented itself to me when I have heard anything about it, or thought anything about it, is this, Why could not the Government let it alone? Mr. Bright devoted a large portion of his speech to criticising Lord Derby's address to the Conservative working men of Edinburgh, remarking in passing that these 'Conservative working men' were never at home at election-time. Lord Derby had spoken of the prosperity of the working classes at the present time, and what he had said was true; but the working classes owed no thanks to Lord Derby's party, who had resisted all the measures which had brought their prosperity about. Then as to his assertion that they were now, by means of the electoral franchise, masters of the political situation, Mr. Bright asked his hearers to recollect that in the counties the franchise was still no lower than £12 rating, which meant £16 rental. He disputed altogether Lord Derby's statements on the land question, into which he went at considerable length, and urged that the law of primogeniture ought to be abolished. What would you think, he asked, if any rich landowner, having, say, six children, were to doom five of them to ignorance, to shut them out from the training belonging to their position in life, and to give training and education to only one child? It would be no more monstrous than that he should shut them out from the whole of his property, and hand that property entirely to one child. Yet such is our law, and such is the custom of the country to an enormous extent. This has, I may say, been the most immoral principle which the law has sanctioned. Now what we ask is this,—and when men ask you what you mean by an alteration of the land laws, this is the kind of answer you may give: We ask for freedom of bequest, not for a forced forfeiture of the land. We ask that land should be the absolute property of each succeeding generation of men.'

Mr. Bright declined to say anything about the policy of the Liberal party, for he thought the Liberal party had too much policy.

He went on, nevertheless, to express his opinion that the towns, having got municipal self-government, should seek to extend that system to the villages. All the good things in the way of legislation had been monopolised by the towns. Even the Education Act, which, despite the criticisms passed upon it, was 'doing some good,' was confined to the towns. He admitted that the enfranchisement of the rural householders would mean a redistribution of seats, but that must come whether or no, though the progress 'might be somewhat steady and slow.' It would be more sure if the franchise was extended to the counties. No doubt (to use the Latin word for the use of which he had been criticised), there would be a 'residuum' among the agricultural voters; but was there not a residuum among the landlords? Was there not a residuum in the Church? Appealing, in conclusion, to the electors before him, he said: 'I tell you that your own powers are warped and crippled by the paralysis which extends over the county representation, and if you could only examine the question fairly, you would find that what I am asking you to undertake is to strengthen and confirm your own powers, whilst you are extending your franchises and rights to your fellow-countrymen in the counties. Give to the people who are now excluded that freedom which the constitution has given to you; give them the freedom of the soil upon which they live, and you will invite them—and with a cordial hand you will receive them—you will invite them to partake of that sublime justice which injures no one, but is rich in blessings and in benefits to all who are permitted to share it.'

In the course of the subsequent proceedings, and when answering questions put to him, Mr. Bright referred to the representation of labour. After paying a high tribute to Mr. Burt, whom he greatly esteemed, but not as the member for a class, he remarked: 'The only people who are returned to Parliament as the representatives of a particular trade are the brewers. I have some kind friends amongst the brewers, but they would be the very last persons to expect me to give them my vote because they are brewers; but really this question is not whether a man works at a bench or at a lathe, whether he is a doctor, or a lawyer, or a tradesman, or a

brewer, or the son of a nobleman. Let us get rid of these notions. The intelligent constituencies, incorrupt like this of Birmingham, anxious to do their duty to themselves and their country, surely they can find men as men—not as a particular kind of men, but as men who will be honourable representatives, and who will do credit to us and good service in Parliament. I hope that those who brought forward this amendment will not think that I feel sore at the course they have thought fit to pursue. I only think that it was injudicious, because I feel that the Liberal party is always under a great disadvantage compared with the Tories, for the reason that it embraces a greater variety of sentiments and aims. You see how they work together in every constituency; they do not seek to know much about a candidate. If he is of the right colour, he is taken, and no questions are asked. So it is with them in the House of Commons, in their treatment of the leader of their party and of the Government. So no man should ever introduce questions which tend needlessly to split up the Liberal party; he ought only to do so under the greatest pressure of circumstances from which he cannot escape.’

On the 2nd of January, 1877, Mr. Bright attended the annual *soirée* of the Rochdale Working Men’s Club, and delivered an address. The club is entirely self-supporting, and independent of the patronage of the wealthy. Referring to the Gothenburg system of public-house management,—which Mr. Chamberlain, one of the members for Birmingham, had just explained to the public,—Mr. Bright said that the club whose anniversary they were celebrating had one advantage which the Gothenburg system had not, inasmuch as it did not urge its members to drink, but was glad when they abstained. Public opinion had put down duelling, and it might perhaps put down intemperance. He was not in the habit of using intoxicating liquors himself, but he was not in favour of a law which should say that no man should use such articles. There were many other things which the Legislature might do; as, for instance, keeping better order in public-houses, and lessening the temptations which were now offered to all men to take more drink than they ought. But even when all that legislation could do had been done,

he would rely upon reason and experience for carrying the reform still farther.

The right hon. gentleman then went on to review at some length the change for the better which had taken place in the condition of the working classes during the past forty years, and attributed it to the abolition of protective laws, which formerly crippled the industry of the country, and to other political and social reforms which had been accomplished without violence or insurrection, and by which the tenure of property and the stability of the monarchy had been rendered more secure. 'There has never been,' said Mr. Bright, 'during the last hundred years, a period when the farmers of this country have made less complaint to the public or to Parliament than they have during the last thirty years, since the law for their protection was abolished. And what happened to the labourer? The wages of farm labourers have risen on the whole much more, I believe, than fifty per cent. throughout the whole country; and in some counties and districts, I believe, the farm labourer at this moment is receiving double the wages he was when the Corn Law was in existence. We ought to learn from this what a grand thing it is to establish our laws upon a basis of freedom and justice. It blesses him who gives and him who takes. It has blessed all our manufacturing districts with a steadiness of employment and an abundance they never knew before; and it has blessed not less the very class who in their dark error and blindness thought that they could profit by that which was so unjust, so cruel to the bulk of their countrymen.' If asked why he had gone over again the old story of the Corn Law and the sugar monopoly, he replied, because it told working men and their children of freedom—how freedom was won and what freedom had done for them, while it pointed the way to other paths of freedom which yet lay open before them.

In a passing reference to the Eastern Question, Mr. Bright said he was glad to hear and believe that the policy of the Government was more in accordance with the policy indicated by public opinion than it was some weeks before. He did not blame the Government for their original policy, for it was supposed at the time to be the policy of the nation. They began with the policy of 1854 and of



the Crimean war, and they adhered to its propositions some time after they ought to have abandoned it; but they had now adopted a course more in accordance with the opinions, and, as he believed, the true interests of the people. Mr. Bright concluded by urging upon working men the importance of securing a good education for their children. 'You know, I dare say,' he observed, 'a passage which is one of the many striking passages that you may find in the writings of Shakspeare, where he says, speaking of children that are rebellious and troublesome—

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child."

I ask working men, and I might ask it of every class to a certain extent, how much of the unhappiness of families, how much of the grief and gloom which often overshadow the later years of parents, come from what I may call the rebellion of children against their parents' authority, and against the moral law? If you will send your children to school, encourage them in their learning, make them feel that this is a great thing for them to possess, the generation to come will be much superior to the generations that have passed, and those who come after us will see that prospering, of which we can only look forward to see the beginnings in the efforts which are now being made. And more than this, besides making your families happier, besides doing so much for the success of your children in life, you will also produce this great result, that you will do much to build up the fabric of the greatness and the glory of your country upon the sure foundation of an intelligent and a Christian people.'

At the invitation of Mr. Chamberlain and the Liberals of the borough, Mr. Gladstone visited Birmingham on the 31st of May, 1877, and delivered a series of addresses on public topics. The first of these was delivered on the evening of the 31st at Bingley Hall, when it was computed that there were some 30,000 persons present. The speech was chiefly devoted to the Eastern Question. On the following day, after going over the Small Arms Factory at Small Heath, the right hon. gentleman went to the Bristol Street Board School, where he was presented with an address from the





Committee of the Liberal Association, known as the 'Birmingham Six Hundred.' In the evening, he was entertained by the Mayor at a banquet in the Queen's Hotel, at which about two hundred gentlemen were present, including prominent members of the 'Six Hundred,' and members of the Corporation. Among the guests was Mr. Bright, who arrived from London, and was conducted by Mr. Chamberlain and others to the Queen's Hotel amidst the cheers of a large crowd. Several other members of Parliament were also present. In acknowledging the toast of his health, Mr. Gladstone touched upon his magnificent reception, and went on to say that he hoped Birmingham would continue to set an example of municipal spirit to all the municipalities of the country. Referring to the way in which Mr. Bright had been ready to sacrifice his popularity during the Crimean war, Mr. Gladstone said such conduct ennobled a man and the country which produced him.

When Mr. Bright rose to respond to the toast of the borough members, he was loudly cheered, the whole company standing. He said that the people of Birmingham had had a stirring week. They had had amongst them the most eminent man among the statesmen of this country and of this century; they had had the greatest political meeting within our own time held under one roof; and they had had what all the world would say was a great speech upon a great and solemn question. The object of their proceeding was twofold. The first had reference to the present policy of the country upon a question of extraordinary and unsurpassed importance, and the second was to do something to promote in future a more complete organisation of the Liberal party throughout the country. As to the Eastern Question, Mr. Bright said it would become him best to say almost nothing. Mr. Gladstone had referred in very kind, complimentary, and touching terms to the part he took in past times with regard to it, when he was in opposition to an overwhelming tide of public opinion. Now he could afford to be silent, and he ought to be tranquil, and in some degree a spectator, because he saw the policy he had preached successful and triumphant. On the proposal for improving the organisation of the Liberal party, Mr. Bright spoke at some length, observing that while it was not prac-

ticable for every borough to do what was done in Birmingham (where there was such a predominance of Liberal opinion), yet in all boroughs some organisation of the kind might be most beneficial, and to a large extent most effectual. He next enumerated some of the causes which he considered operated to reduce the Liberal majority after the passing of the Household Suffrage Bill. The Liberals did not take means to support the power of the party in the different constituencies of the country, and they had also against them the influence of the landowners, the Church, the naval and military services, and the great majority of the professions. He believed that a good result would follow the increase of thought and activity which the proposed federation of Liberal associations would occasion. He was glad that no political programme was to be laid down, for he disliked programmes of any kind—they were as bad as the Thirty-Nine Articles. What should be done should be to stimulate an honest and wise interest in the politics of the country. In conclusion, Mr. Bright paid the following tribute to the town of Birmingham :—

‘This week Birmingham is maintaining its ancient character. There is no town in England at this moment that occupies so great, and so proud, and at the same time so responsible a position as your town. You are foremost in good works, and have been for many years past. Your Town Hall is consecrated to freedom, but your Town Hall is now not one-quarter large enough for all those who would come to listen to a great speech on behalf of freedom. You now call upon your sister cities and towns throughout the kingdom to come forward and to join in a great association, in order that the opinion in England which is in favour of freedom may act with full force by its full development; and I say, then, that we have a right to hope that from this centre and heart of the country, as you are geographically and as you are politically—I say from the centre and heart of the country there should go forth light and warmth and heat, which should be seen and felt in every borough in the kingdom. And if it be so, and if you get the answer which I anticipate from those sister cities and towns, there is no measure that is good and noble, nothing that is a measure of freedom and justice, that you may not carry; and you from this centre may influence, as you have heretofore influenced, the administration and the legislation that touches every portion of the great empire of which we form a part.’

In the session of 1877 Mr. Trevelyan brought forward his motion for the extension of household suffrage to the counties, and the redistribution of seats. The motion was defeated by a majority of 56, the numbers being 220 and 276 respectively; but the debate

was of great significance, as from this time forward the measure was formally adopted by the Liberals as an article of their future Ministerial creed.

A great meeting of agricultural labourers' delegates was held in Exeter Hall, to support Mr. Trevelyan's motion, and to listen to a speech from Mr. Bright. The meeting was a very representative one of all divisions of the country, and resolutions were passed in favour of household suffrage in the counties, and of a redistribution of seats, so as to obtain a better representation of the electoral body. Mr. Bright delivered a very effective and vigorous speech. He attributed the great advance of this country in the past forty-five years mainly to the Reform Bill, which enfranchised the citizens of the boroughs, and he believed that nearly equal results would follow the enfranchisement of the people in the counties. He looked to them in particular for a total change in the land laws. He repudiated the argument that the labourers were unfit for the franchise, holding that we must trust them as we had trusted the artisans in the boroughs. In an ironical vein, Mr. Bright observed that we might trust them the more easily because agricultural labourers had all 'the advantages' their superiors so appreciated for them. For them were the fresh air and the sunshine, for them especially the influence of the squire. They ought to be better than artisans by the landlords' own showing. He strongly eulogised the labourers' associations for sending up so numerous a body of delegates—twelve hundred picked men; and assured them, if they would only unite, of an easy victory. In order to secure this, however, they must associate themselves with their brethren of the towns.

When Mr. Bright unveiled the Cobden statue at Bradford, on the 25th of July, 1877—an event referred to elsewhere—after the ceremony was over he was entertained at luncheon with other guests at the Victoria Hotel, Bradford, by Mr. Jacob Behrens, President of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce. In replying to the toast of his health, Mr. Bright spoke on the question of Free Trade. He dwelt on the effect which extended commercial intercourse between countries had in rendering war between them

almost impossible—as in the case of England and France since the adoption of the Commercial Treaty; and he suggested the formation of an international committee, which should endeavour to bring about the reduction of tariffs all over Europe, until the various countries should be so bound together by their commercial interests that the maintenance of large armaments ‘would be an act of absolute and obvious lunacy.’ He maintained that for England to return to Protection under any form, to Reciprocity, which meant a war of tariffs, would be to bar the progress of the world, and to destroy our hopes of future peace. In the United States the system of Protection had been shaken, and was tottering to its fall. ‘The fact is,’ said the right hon. gentleman, discussing the future of commerce, ‘the world, as we are in it but for a very short time, does not seem to go on very fast, and we must be satisfied if we can only move it a little; but the interests of all mankind are so bound up in this question, that it only wants that you should dispel the sort of fog which intercepts their vision, when they would come at once to see a promised land which was within their reach, and a fruit such as they have never tasted that was within their grasp; and if this view could once be opened up to the intelligent people in these countries of a constantly growing intelligence, I have a confident belief that the time will come, that it must come, that it is in the decrees of the Supreme that it shall come, when these vast evils shall be suppressed, and men shall not learn war any more, and God’s earth shall not be made, as it is, a charnel-house by the constant murder of hundreds of thousands of His creatures.’

The new Town Hall at Manchester—built from the designs of Mr. Waterhouse—was formally opened on the 13th of September, 1877, by the Mayor, Mr. Abel Heywood. In the evening there was a banquet, presided over by the Mayor, and among the guests were the Lord Chief Justice, the Bishop of Manchester, Mr. John Bright, Lord Winmarleigh, and several members of Parliament representing Lancashire towns.

In responding to the toast of the House of Commons, Mr. Bright remarked that for some time the health of that body had been indifferent, and he suggested as a remedy that it should be sent to

the country. Referring to the state of the cotton trade, he warned the people of Manchester of circumstances affecting trade, and perhaps pointing to certain dangers, which it would not be wise entirely to overlook :—

‘Thus we often find, with all our philanthropy in wishing the people to have more recreation, and with the hope that many feel that the workman should better his condition through his combinations, that we are ourselves aiding—it may be inevitably and necessarily—but it is a fact that we are aiding to increase the difficulties under which we labour in sending foreign countries the products of the industry of these districts ; and we must not forget that great cities have fallen before Manchester and Liverpool were known—great mercantile cities on the shores of the Mediterranean, the cities of Phœnicia, the cities of Carthage, Genoa, and Venice. The poet says of Venice—

“ Her daughters had their dowers  
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East  
Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.”

But what are the lines with which he concludes ?—

“ Venice lost and won,  
Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done,  
Sinks like a seaweed into whence she rose.”

Therefore, when we are met in this magnificent hall to enjoy the generous hospitality of the Mayor and his friends, and surrounded by the vast industries of this powerful district, let us not for a moment imagine that we stand on a foundation absolutely sure and immovable, or that we are not liable to the dangers which have overthrown and overwhelmed the great municipalities and cities and the prosperous industries of other countries and other times.’

Mr. Bright then went on to deal with the question of Indian administration. He said that we hardly did anything except under the pressure of some great emergency and calamity. The calamity of the Mutiny overthrew the East India Company ; and he hoped from his heart that the calamity which had overtaken a part of India, and which stirred the hearts of all the people of England, would have the effect of opening up a new and a better policy. We had spent more than £100,000,000 in making railways in India, and many of them were profitable ; but when the Government undertook to provide railways, they did it largely from the idea that they would be of great service in a military point of view. He believed, however, that if we had spent one-third of the amount we had spent on railways in canals for navigation and irrigation, none of those famines which during the last few years had swept away, or were sweeping away,



two or three millions of the population would have occurred; the condition of the people would have been better, the production of the soil enormously increased, the traffic between England and India in its supply of articles we want would have been greatly extended, and its power from its greater wealth of consuming the productions of our industry would also have been far beyond anything we had hitherto seen. Mr. Bright, referring to the plans of Sir Arthur Cotton, said he believed it was calculated that the whole of the canals Sir Arthur proposed might have been made for the sum of probably twenty-five millions, certainly not more than thirty millions sterling, which, after all, was a mere bagatelle, because it was only a million a year in interest, and only about three times as much as was spent in the miserable Abyssinian war. 'If there is some question of that kind,' said Mr. Bright, 'Parliament grants £10,000,000 or £20,000,000, and the thing is done; they say the honour of the country is concerned. Can there be anything in which the honour of the country is more concerned than this, that we, whose fathers conquered India, with its two hundred millions of people—can there be anything in which our interests are more concerned than that we, their children, should if possible turn that bequest to the greatest account, and having received, we know not how or why, that great responsibility, we should endeavour, if possible, adequately to fulfil it? Almsgiving is often very good, but not always. Almsgiving now is general throughout the country on behalf of the Indian sufferers; let every man's purse be open as his heart is open, and let him give; but I tell him, without the slightest hesitation, that though what he gives will carry its blessing with it now to some poor wretch in that distant country, still it will do little for the future. What you want is a new and a wiser and a broader policy; and that policy, I much fear, you will never have from the Government of Calcutta until the people of England say that it is their policy, and must be adopted.'

On the 25th of September, 1877, Mr. Bright attended a meeting at Rochdale, and distributed the Queen's prizes and the certificates of merit to the successful students of the science and art classes of the Rochdale Co-operative Equitable Pioneers' Society. Addressing

the meeting, he spoke of the progress of science and art during the past century, and of the mode in which modern scientific discoveries had been devoted to the improvement of the condition of the people. He referred especially to the manufacture of gas, the application of steam-power to the purposes of production, and to the wonderful strides which of late years had been made by the cheap press. Mr. Bright pointed out that all inventions of modern science—the telegraph, the steamboat, the locomotive, photography, &c., although they had given additional power to wealth, had done far more for the working classes. Science, he remarked, was the most just and beneficent of all the dispensers of good. It spread its blessings over all the people. ‘Does not the gas shine with the same brilliancy in one of your cottages as it does here? Does not the steamboat take one of you, although you may be living upon your six days’ wages for your six days’ work, and you have not much to spare—does not the same boat take you as rapidly and as safely across the ocean as it takes some man deputed by the Government of his country to some great negotiation in foreign lands? Does not the railway, on most of the lines at least, take the third-class passengers at the same speed at which even Royalty itself travels?’ The speaker concluded by urging his hearers to bring the same energy and hard-headedness which distinguished them when in pursuit of their trades to the pursuit of knowledge in their leisure hours, and they would speedily find that they had travelled a long distance. From Rochdale they might not have many great inventors, but still great things would be done.

A meeting was held at Rochdale on the 7th of November, 1877, for the purpose of hearing an address from Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., on political organisation, and particularly upon the machinery by which the town of Birmingham had been able to defeat the minority clause in the Reform Act of 1877.

Mr. Bright delivered a brief introductory speech, and began by contrasting the motives which had guided the two great political parties in their legislative efforts, observing that to the Conservatives belonged shame and humiliation, and to the Liberals a very high degree of satisfaction and just pride, when they contemplated the

results of the last half-century of legislation and government in this country. He gave the Conservatives credit for the possession of a solid and permanent organisation, the strength of which was to be found in the landed interest, the Church, the military and legal professions, and in the publicans; and said that unless the Liberal party organised themselves to advance their own cause and principles, the country would go back, and we might even lose some of the liberties we had gained. Touching upon the landed interest, Mr. Bright said that he did not advocate any system of legislation which would deprive anybody of a single acre of land, but the land should be divided a little more equally among the great body of the people; and he objected to laws which created and maintained a monopoly in this matter. In speaking of the Church, Mr. Bright referred to the recent charge of the Bishop of Truro, in which he strongly advised the clergy upon the necessity for them to complete their organisation, so as to be the better able to contend with, and, if possible to overcome Dissent in Cornwall, which was the most religious county in England. Mr. Bright said he thought that was very strange, and proved beyond all question what a tendency there was in an Established Church to fight for the Church rather than for Christianity. In speaking of the Conservative party as being especially opposed to a reform of the law, he said: 'The laws of this country, in their complexity, in their entanglement, in their costliness, are a disgrace to a civilised people. Two hundred years ago Cromwell, who was no bad judge of these things, said, "The law of England is a tortuous and ungodly jumble." But you might almost as well ask a spider to give up weaving his web or to destroy the web he has woven, as ask the great body of lawyers to consent to the simplification and purification of the law.' Observing that Rochdale had done its duty well since the year 1832, Mr. Bright added: 'I recall to myself the names of the men who have had to speak in your voice in the House of Commons, and on every fitting occasion to promote the principles you hold dear—Fenton, Sharman Crawford, Miall, Cobden, and your present member, Mr. Potter. Let us then keep the flame alive. Let us, if we can, be as we have been in the past, an example to many other constituencies.'

The right hon. gentleman then introduced Mr. Chamberlain, in very complimentary language, to the audience. After the lecture, votes of thanks were passed to the chairman and his colleague. Mr. Bright, in responding, alluding to observations which had been made as to the possibility of our being involved in war, said that the members of a Government which would go to war for such visionary objects as to prevent the passage of Russian fleets through the Dardanelles were only fit to become inmates 'of one of those public buildings in which are placed, for their own preservation, such of our unhappy fellow-creatures as had become bereaved of their reason.' He further said that he agreed with Mr. Chamberlain that, save and except the question which was near at hand—the county franchise—there was no question which was so near to our prosperity, and our deliverance from many of the great depressions of trade, as the question of land reform.

On the 19th of April, 1878, Mr. Bright attended the annual Good Friday Conference of the Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire Sunday School Association at Rochdale. The assembly represented the teachers of nearly 500,000 children in the various Sunday schools of the district. The right hon. gentleman delivered an address, tracing the influence of the Sunday school upon the morals, manners, and education of the young. Having pointed out the effect which the establishment of Board schools was having upon religious teaching, he proceeded to argue that one of the special duties of a Sunday school teacher was to instil principles antagonistic to war of any kind, or on any pretext. He said the unanimous opinion of the Nonconformist element in the country was against war; and he reiterated his opinion that every object for which war was sometimes considered necessary could be obtained by peaceful negotiation. Mr. Bright thus forcibly concluded his address:—

'If on Sunday last it had been put, or if on Sunday next it could be put, to all the Nonconformist Free Church congregations throughout Great Britain, whether it were the duty or the interest of this country to be involved in war or not, I have no doubt whatsoever that throughout all those congregations, from Caithness to Cornwall, there would have been a universal and unanimous voice in favour of the preservation of peace. Lord Derby said not long ago that the greatest of British interests was peace. Can it be possible that the Christian men and women who are engaged in

your holy work should not coincide with him in that view? You are yourselves the ministers, humble but earnest, of the Prince of Peace. It is, therefore, within your calling, within your solemn duty,—even, it may be, your special duty on an occasion like this,—that you should express some feeling on this question; and if there ascends from your heart a prayer to the throne of the Most High on behalf of your children and on behalf of your nation, let it be a prayer that He may turn the hearts of your rulers from thoughts of war, and bring them to sentiments of mercy and of peace. When I think of the illustrious lady who sits upon the throne of these realms, when I think how bright in the main are the annals of her reign—the one greatest blot upon them in our time, and until now, is the war of twenty-four years ago,—let us hope that our hearts may be spared the sorrow that must afflict us, and the record of her reign be spared the additional blot which would be cast upon it if again the blood of our countrymen should be shed in favour of a cause which no man can distinctly define or describe, and in pursuit of objects which no rational man in the world believes it is possible for arms to obtain.’

With regard to the question of Free Trade and Protection, Mr. Bright has frequently expressed his surprise at the slow progress made in the United States in this matter. One of his most important letters on the subject was addressed to Mr. Cyrus W. Field, of New York, on the 21st of January, 1879. ‘I do not think,’ he wrote, ‘that anything an Englishman could say would have any effect upon an American Protectionist. The man who possesses a monopoly by which he thinks he gains is not open to argument. It was so in this country forty years ago, and it is so with you now. It is strange that a people who put down slavery at an immense sacrifice are not able to suppress monopoly, which is but a milder form of the same evil. Under slavery, the man was seized and his labour was stolen from him, and the profit of it enjoyed by his master and owner. Under Protection, the man is apparently free, but he is denied the right to exchange the produce of his labour except with his countrymen, who offer him much less for it than the foreigner would give. Some portion of his labour is thus confiscated. In our Protection days our weavers and artisans could not exchange with American flour. They exchanged with an English farmer, who gave them sometimes only half the quantity the American would have given them. Now your farmer is forbidden to trade with the Englishman, and must give to an American double the quantity of grain and flour for many articles he is constantly

requiring that he would give if your laws did not forbid his trade with England. A country may have democratic institutions, its Government may be republican, and based on a wide suffrage, and yet there may be no freedom to men for that which is the source of life and comfort. If a man's labour is not free, if its exchange is not free, the man is not free; and whether the law which enacts this restriction be the offspring of republican or autocratic government and power, it is equally evil, and to be condemned and withstood by all who love freedom and understand what it is. Nations learn slowly—but they do learn; and therefore I do not doubt that the time will come when trade will be as free as the winds, and when freedom of industry will do much to put down great armies and the peril and suffering of war.'

At the time of the Zulu war, and when affairs in the East also absorbed much attention, a letter was addressed to Mr. Bright on behalf of a Birmingham branch of a Workmen's Peace Society, inquiring whether he would support a bill compelling the Crown and Government to consult Parliament before going to war; whether he would support the Beaconsfield Government in proposing the reduction of standing armies; and whether he would support an inquiry into the existing system of pensions, with a view to the abolition of such as those of the Duke of Marlborough and the Duke of Schomberg; and also whether he was in favour of Mr. Macdonald's Liability of Employers Bill, and a bill to shorten Parliaments. Mr. Bright replied as follows, in a letter dated March 11, 1879: 'I cannot say "Yes" or "No" to the questions you put to me. Any answers I could give to them would require explanation and more length of writing than I can put into an ordinary letter. I may say, however, that generally, I doubt not, my views are much in harmony with yours on the points you have named. With regard to the liabilities of employers, if I remember them correctly, I was willing to support the conclusions of the Committee appointed to consider the whole question. The bill then before the House seemed to me to require amendment. The pensions to which you refer should have been terminated by purchase long ago. Those perpetual pensions should never be granted. I

think no Parliament should sit for more than five years; probably three or four years would be a better term. With regard to the reduction of armies, it is ludicrous to think of supporting this Government in any attempt of the kind. The policy of this Government for three years past has made the reduction of armies less possible than it was before, and has been the cause of all the wars which have afflicted the world. During that period they have made needless war in Asia and Africa, and were a main cause of the great war in the east of Europe. I hope they have convinced the nation that Parliament does not exert a sufficient control over the disposition to go to war shown by the Ministers of the Crown. But it must be remembered that the Parliament has partaken largely of the guilt of the Administration. A better House of Commons must precede any of the good things which you are hoping for.'

Foreign affairs and our recent wars formed the burden of a great speech which Mr. Bright delivered in Birmingham on the 10th of April, 1879, when the borough members addressed their constituents in the Town Hall. The right hon. gentleman began his speech by a regretful contrast between that and former meetings of the kind. At most of the previous meetings they could rejoice at the advancing progress of some great principle, or that some great principle had been established in some great act of beneficent legislation. But the most sanguine could not now find any cause for rejoicing or exultation. They had, in point of fact, not one single measure to point to which had been the result of the deliberations of the existing Administration. 'What the Ministers are doing is just this—nothing whatsoever that is useful at home, and everything that you can imagine that is mischievous abroad.' Mr. Bright regretted that it had been the habit of English Governments in former years, as now, to neglect home affairs for foreign; and he insisted that our policy abroad had always proved disastrous, and had been condemned by succeeding generations. The American war was a failure; so was the war to prevent the establishment of a republic in France; so was the Crimean war. There was not a single thing that was obtained by the Treaty of Paris after the Crimean war that had not been surrendered and entirely given up. After bringing his retro-

spect down to the beginning of the late war between Russia and Turkey, 'I believe,' he said, 'that war was only avoided last year by two causes—one was the moderation of Russia immediately after her triumph over Turkey; the other was the course taken by the great Liberal party, by the Nonconformists specially as a great portion of that party, and by the foremost man among the statesmen of this country.'

When the cheering which followed this reference to Mr. Gladstone had subsided, Mr. Bright continued: 'There are men who even now, as they have done, I suppose, for years past, cavil at the position which Mr. Gladstone occupies. I shall say nothing in his defence, but the posterity of those who now slander him will be ashamed of the opinions and of the conduct of their forefathers. But though we have escaped war, we have had, as you know, fleets moving from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, moving and menacing in many seas; and we have had reserves called out, as if something dreadful was about to happen; and we have had the Indian troops—a thing almost unknown in our history—brought into the Mediterranean with a view of carrying on war against Russia; and we have had votes of money which it was said would probably not be spent, but which was for the most part very suddenly and speedily spent; and what has been the actual result? Why, the result of the Crimean war, of the American and of the French war, was not more absurd and more discreditable. We have agreed to everything that Russia proposed, except that we have handed over Roumelia, which has been freed by Russia, to the odious government of the Turks.'

On the subject of Egypt Mr. Bright said: 'The bondholders in connection with the Khedive of Egypt may be put into two classes—the fools who lent the money, and the gamblers who have been speculating in it since. It is said that France has more fools and gamblers than we have in this matter, and that their Government is very anxious to force the Khedive to pay up to the French bondholders. We, not liking that France should have a special interest there, go in also, although our Government does not care much about the English bondholder; but you observe our Government



allows one of its own officers to go there, and France sends an officer there; and these two gentlemen offer to the Khedive to manage all his money affairs; and the Khedive, like a great many people, does not like this kind of transaction, and having read, as I dare say he did read, what Sir Stafford Northcote, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I think within the last month, said—that the Khedive had a right—that it was within his legal right—to get rid of those gentlemen—he has considered whether that was not a wise thing to do, and has dismissed them both very suddenly. Now I take the liberty of expressing the opinion upon this matter, that the whole thing from beginning to end has been a grievous and very stupid mistake, and that the going into partnership with France, or with any other country, in the management of affairs, whatever the country is, is almost sure to lead to great trouble, to irritation, and it may be to entire separation of feeling between two Governments and two countries.’ The proper thing for our Government to do would be to withdraw, and to allow the Khedive and his creditors to manage affairs as well as they could.

Dealing next with the war in Afghanistan, Mr. Bright said he doubted whether there had ever been a war more deformed by falsehood and by dishonour. It was a war notoriously conducted for annexation—whether annexation of a portion or the whole of the country, none of us knew. As the result of the assumed defence of our Indian possessions, there was thrown upon the thirty-four millions of people in the United Kingdom the cost of the enormous burden we had undertaken in our scheme of controlling, reforming, defending, annexing, or advising for the whole ground from the Gulf of Venice and the Adriatic Sea, all round the Mediterranean to Egypt, to the Persian Gulf, through Persia to Afghanistan and the Himalayan Mountains. Mr. Bright next spoke upon our responsibilities in connection with India, but this portion of his speech we have dealt with elsewhere. As to the theory that a neutral zone was desirable between England and Russia in Asia, he said that he had told either Lord Clarendon or Lord Granville and the Duke of Argyll, when his opinion was asked on the subject some years ago, that he thought it would be better if the frontiers of the two

empires were conterminous. Observing that he had not assailed the Government, he said in conclusion—

‘I leave them to the retribution which awaits them. They have played, in my view, falsely both with Parliament and with the country. They have wasted, and are now wasting, the blood and the treasure of our people. They have tarnished the mild reign of the Queen by needless war and slaughter on two continents, and by the menace of needless war in Europe; they have soiled the fair name of England by subjecting and handing over the population of a province which had been freed by Russia, through war and treaty, to the cruel and the odious government of the Turk. And beyond this, they have shown, in my view, during an interval of five years through which they have been in possession of office and of power, that they are imbecile at home and turbulent and wicked abroad. I leave them to the judgment of the constituencies of the United Kingdom, to which they must speedily appeal, and to the heavy condemnation which impartial history will pronounce upon them.’

This speech, with the later speeches of Mr. Gladstone, had much to do with rousing the feeling of the country against the ‘spirited’ foreign policy of Lord Beaconsfield’s Administration.

Mr. Rice, editor of the *North American Review*, having written to Mr. Bright for his opinion as to the nature and extent of the alleged movement in favour of Protection in England, the right hon. gentleman replied as follows early in June 1879:—

‘I do not think there is any chance in this country of a return to the doctrine of Protection. We export everything but agricultural produce. To protect our manufactures is manifestly impossible. From another cause the protection of our land produce is not more possible. Half our population exists on imported food. To limit this import by customs duties, in order to raise the price of home-grown food, is a proposition that cannot be entertained for one moment. Such a scheme offered to Parliament and the country would destroy any Government and any party. We are passing through a time of commercial depression. Its causes are apparent to those who examine and consider the facts of recent past years. But in times of trouble ignorant men seize upon unlikely and impossible propositions and schemes for relief. There is no special remedy for this malady. Time, patience, the working of natural laws, the avoidance and cessation of the excitement and half-madness of the past, and a general economy, will bring about a cure, not without some or much suffering, but without failure. We adopted Free Trade in the year 1846. But our landowners and farmers, and multitudes of our people, did not comprehend the principles we taught, and now a new generation is on the stage, ill-acquainted even with the facts of forty years ago. There has been no great distress since our Corn Law was abolished; and now, when trouble has come for a time, some of the sufferers, and some of the quack doctors who are always ready to prescribe for the public, cry out for Protection, as if we never tried it before, and as if it had been found a specific in other countries. There is no danger of our going back to Protection.

The present trouble will pass away. It has been aggravated by the evil policy of our Government; and that also will pass away; and the simpletons who are looking for relief to an exploded doctrine and practice will relapse into that silence and obscurity which become them. It is a grief to me that your people do not yet see their way to a more moderate tariff. They are doing wonders unequalled in the world's history in paying off their national debt. A moderate tariff, I should think, would give you a better revenue, and by degrees you might approach a more civilised system. What can be more strange than for your great free country to build barriers against that commerce which is everywhere the handmaid of freedom and of civilisation? I should despair of the prospects of mankind if I did not believe that before long the intelligence of your people would revolt against the barbarism of your tariff. The world looks to you for example in all forms of freedom. As to commerce, the great civiliser, shall it look in vain?

Two or three months after penning this letter, Mr. Bright took another opportunity of demolishing various fallacies in connection with Protection, as well as certain erroneous notions respecting his own attitude and that of his fellow-agitators against the Corn Laws. Mr. William Russell, a working man in Glasgow, who described himself as having been an enthusiastic member of the Anti-Corn-Law League, having written to Mr. Bright asking his opinion as to the existing widespread depression in trade, the right hon. gentleman replied as follows:—

‘You say that in our agitation, now nearly forty years ago, we urged that a necessary consequence of Corn Law repeal would be that “war would cease, and that there would be no more commercial and agricultural depression.” We never said this. We said that Free Trade greatly tends to promote peace between nations, and that commercial depression caused by the Corn Laws on the occasion of every bad harvest would be prevented. Before 1846, and during the thirty years of Corn Law, there were five or six Parliamentary Committees on agricultural distress; during more than thirty years of free imports of corn, until this session, there has been no such Committee appointed or asked for; and now all sensible men know that the Commission to be appointed is a mere delusion, held out to cajole the farmers. War has not ceased. *We* made the Russian war in 1854, and since then the armaments of Europe have much more than doubled. Free trade—imports of corn—cannot make Englishmen or Scotchmen sensible or moral. But with regard to France, every man must know that our relations with France have been much more friendly since Mr. Cobden’s treaty came into force; and that now we are on most friendly terms with the nation with whom in past times we have most frequently contended on the battle-field. As to Germany and its tariff, its military expenditure demands more taxes, and by offering higher duties to her manufacturers, higher taxes are made less unwelcome to many of her people. I am not aware of any movement towards Protection in Italy, or Belgium, or France. In France the cause of Free

Trade is far more powerful now than at any former period. America has had her tremendous civil war; but for that and her enormous debt, Protection would have been dead and buried long ago; and nobody surely expected or said that the repeal of our Corn Law could make or prevent a civil war on the great question of slavery in the United States! Why don't you and your friends ask why American commercial distress has been much deeper and more prolonged than our own? Yet America has all the good which Protection can give her. We are suffering from many bad harvests at home; from famines and poverty in India and China; from depression in North and South America; from like suffering in Germany; from war in the east of Europe; and from the extravagance and inflation of the years preceding the present bad times. And, after all, our people as a whole suffer infinitely less than in the three years from 1839 to 1842; and our farm labourers, who were to be specially ruined, are receiving nearly double the wages, and of that which wages can buy, than they received in the three years to which I have referred. If you use your faculties as well now as you did in the days of the Free Trade contest, you will not doubt the wisdom of our present policy.'

On the subject of Canadian policy Mr. Bright wrote the following letter, dated Rochdale, August 16, 1879, to a gentleman in New York: 'The policy of the Canadian Government seems to me injurious to the inhabitants of the Dominion, and, if persisted in, will be fatal to its connection with the mother-country. To shut out the manufactures of England is bad enough, but at the same time to seek to borrow money from her on a guarantee for a loan is a scheme and a policy so impudent that it cannot succeed. The great railway project of Canada can only add to the debt of Canada, and this can only cause heavier taxes, and will be made the excuse for still higher protective duties on imports; so that England's generous but foolish help to the colony, if further given, will tend directly to cripple the trade between them. I believe the present policy of the Canadian Government is inflicting a wound on the union between the colony and England from which, if it be not speedily reversed, great changes must come. I watch the progress of the Protection malady in the States and Canada with great interest. I cannot think it will continue very long.'

The restless and meddlesome policy of the Beaconsfield Government in Asia and the east of Europe, which for some time had apparently received the approbation of the country, began to be appreciated at its real value by the autumn of 1879. There is not an Administration in the history of the country since the time of

Walpole which so wantonly, and without reason, outraged the sentiments of the great mass of the people of England, as did Lord Beaconsfield's Government in the years extending from 1875 to the beginning of the year 1880. At last the people began to awake from their nightmare. They asked themselves whether it had been a worthy exchange—that of the dismissal of Mr. Gladstone, the greatest commercial and domestic Minister that England has ever seen, for Lord Beaconsfield, who had only a so-called enterprising foreign policy to fall back upon, that policy being framed according to circumstances and not to conviction,—framed in the most haphazard and fortuitous manner. The Government found at last that the sands were shifting under them, and that a great effort must be made to retain their waning popularity. After much cogitation, what did they do? They decided to beard the Opposition in one of their most powerful quarters.

The situation being regarded as critical, it was deemed advisable that Lord Salisbury should go down to Manchester, with the double object of showing that the Government was not afraid to appeal to the country in one of the greatest of Liberal strongholds, and also of expounding the chief doctrines of the Conservative creed. After much Tory skirmishing elsewhere, on the 17th and 18th of October, accordingly, Lord Salisbury appeared at the Pomona Gardens, Manchester. The demonstration was heralded for weeks beforehand, and the very fact that the Tories dared to invest one of the great Liberal strongholds, drew together many thousands of persons who were considered to sympathise with the Conservative demonstration, but who in reality were not the least in harmony with it. Lord Salisbury spoke at length upon his Circular concerning the San Stefano Treaty, and its purpose of resisting Russian encroachment. He said nothing, however, to indicate what course the Government meant to take in consequence of the new turn of affairs in Afghanistan. He described the new alliance between Austria and Germany as 'glad tidings of great joy.'

The vast assemblage in the Pomona Gardens was estimated by the managers of the meeting at from 150,000 to 200,000. It led to a great counterblast on the part of the Liberals. Although the

Conservatives had been preparing for weeks, the Liberal gathering which took place only a week later—that is, on the 25th—was said by journals not favourable to the Liberal cause to have appeared a larger one than that organised by the Tories. Mr. R. N. Philips, M.P., presided at the meeting held in the large hall, and a number of Liberal members were on the platform. A resolution condemning the Government for its neglect of necessary domestic legislation, and for ‘the arrogant, pretentious duplicity and incompetence of its foreign policy,’ was adopted. The Marquis of Hartington (who on the previous day had replied in detail to Lord Salisbury’s defence of his Circular) now made a brief speech, in which he drew a contrast between the present and the late Administrations, and declared that when the time came the Liberals would not be afraid to appeal to the country upon the ground of any comparison that might be made.

But the chief duty of the day, as regards the condemnation of Tory policy and the defence of the Liberal programme, fell upon Mr. Bright. On rising to speak, he had a most enthusiastic reception. The audience rose, a band behind the platform struck up ‘The Fine Old English Gentleman,’ and several verses of the song were sung by the audience. Afterwards the cheering was again and again renewed. In the outset there was some little disturbance in the vast audience, arising from the fact that all present could not see the speaker. This feeling was expressed by one of the right hon. gentleman’s admirers, who called out, ‘They want to look at you, John!’ This voice crying in the wilderness led to another general demonstration of applause, and when order had been something like restored the orator proceeded.

Mr. Bright replied at length to Lord Salisbury’s attack on the Free Trade legislation of thirty years back, and gave an eloquent summary of the questions that would come before the country at the general election. ‘When Sir Robert Peel came into office in the year 1841, and when he began in 1842 to amend the tariff, he found a list of duties I dare say longer than this paper, beginning with corn at the top, and going down to something which was called “divi-divi.” (Laughter.) I recollect that when the word “divi-

divi" was pronounced in the House of Commons, there was a universal looking at one another among the members. Nearly everybody laughed, and everybody admitted that he had never heard of it before. But our tariff was so minute, the net was so fine and the meshes were so small, that scarcely anything could pass it. Corn was kept out, the millions of quarters that we wanted, and "divi-divi" was subject to a considerable duty. (Laughter.) According to the doctrines of Lord Salisbury, what would he and his party have done at that time? They would have begun with "divi-divi"—(laughter and cheers); and if it had not been for the Anti-Corn-Law League, and the occasional, the growing, and the inevitable famine, they would not have arrived at the article of corn even to this day.' (Cheers.)

The vastness of his audience seemed almost to overcome Mr. Bright at the commencement of his speech, but as he proceeded his voice regained all its old power, and penetrated to every corner of the great hall. Remarkably incisive were his attacks upon the Government and its leading members. Lord Beaconsfield he described as 'the man who, of all others, with the most bitter invective, with the most audacious insinuations, with the most violent slanders, did his very utmost to injure and to destroy the character of Sir Robert Peel.' Lord Salisbury he described as 'the man who has prostrated his intellect to the Premier in the hope of purchasing a succession that may never come.' Speaking of the attempt to force England into a war with Russia, Mr. Bright, in a comprehensive indictment, declared that 'there were criminals at head-quarters, fools and imbeciles among the people, and baseness enough amongst the proprietors and the writers of some newspapers, to give for a time a semblance of popularity to the madness and the guilt of such a war.'

On the question of Free Trade and Reciprocity, Mr. Bright observed, with regard to the opponents of Free Trade: 'They say that "Free Trade is not so good as we thought, and Protection is not so bad as we thought; and if the Protectionists of foreign countries will not follow our course, we will go back from our course

and adopt the course they have pursued." That is what Protectionists and Reciprocity-mongers say. (Laughter and cheers.) And there is another thing they say—that we promised that all other nations would immediately become Free-traders, which is not true—(hear, hear)—and they argue falsely and foolishly that because other nations to a large extent still maintain the principles of Protection, therefore our course is to a large extent proved to have been wrong. May I just explain for one moment what is the difference? They say, "Foreign nations have taken up your penny postage; the great measure recommended by Sir Rowland Hill is one which Europe and all the civilised world have adopted." And they say, "All Europe and the civilised world have adopted your system of railways." What is the difference? Just this—that nobody had any interest in paying one shilling for a letter when he could have it carried for a penny. Nobody had any interest in going in an old slow coach at a high price when he could go in the railway train five times as fast for one-fifth of the cost.'

The right hon. gentleman next contrasted the work achieved by Mr. Disraeli's Government and the great Administration of Mr. Gladstone, with its Irish reforms, its abolition of purchase, &c. He also asked—'If the Zulu war had been brought before the House of Commons; if the Afghan war, with its fraud and its slaughter, and its chaos over that region, had been brought before the House of Commons; if it had been submitted to the House of Commons that we should go to war with Russia upon this single question—for that was the whole question at last—whether Bulgaria should all be free, or whether a part of it should be free and a portion less free—does any man here, whatever he may think of the Tory party and the mechanical majority in the House—does any man here believe that the Tory party would have, by distinct vote in the House of Commons, plunged the country into any one of these wars?' ('No,' and cheers.)

In conclusion, Mr. Bright called for worthier men to be placed at the head of affairs; and this was his peroration:—

'We have heard lately a great deal of "Imperial policy" and of a "great empire." These are phrases which catch the ignorant and unwary. Since this Government



came into office your great empire—upon the map—has grown much greater. They have annexed the islands of Fiji—(laughter)—they have annexed also the country of the Transvaal in South Africa, which is said to be as large as France. They have practically annexed the land of the Zulus, also in South Africa; and they have practically annexed—for it is now utterly disorganised, and they seem to be left alone to repair, if it is possible, the mischief they have made—they have practically annexed Afghanistan. They have added also to your dominions the island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean—(laughter)—and they have incurred enormous, incalculable responsibilities in Egypt and Asia Minor. All these add to the burdens, not of the empire—just listen to this—they add to the burdens, not of the empire in Canada or Australia—all these colonies have nothing to do as a rule with these things—they add to the burdens, not of the empire, but of the 34,000,000 people who inhabit Great Britain and Ireland. We take the burden and we pay the charge. This policy may lend a seeming glory to the Crown, and may give scope for patronage, and promotion, and pay, and pensions to a limited and favoured class; but to you, the people, it brings expenditure of blood and treasure, increased debt and taxes, and added risks of war in every quarter of the globe.

‘Look on our position for one moment. You have to meet the competition of other countries; your own race on the American continent are your foremost rivals. Nobody denies that, I believe. They are fifty millions now, and happily for them they have not yet bred a Beaconsfield or a Salisbury—(laughter and cheers)—to misdirect their policy and to waste their resources. (Loud cheers.) If at some distant period, it may be centuries remote, an Englishman—one of that great English nation which is now so rapidly peopling the American continent—if such an Englishman should visit and explore the sources of his race, and the decayed and ruined home of his fathers, he may exclaim, “How are the mighty fallen! Whence comes this great ruin?” And the answer will be, that in the councils of the England of the past—I pray that it may not be said in the days of a virtuous Queen—wisdom and justice were scorned, and ignorance, and passion, and vain-glory directed her policy and wielded her power.’ (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

We turn from this speech, which had a great effect upon the public mind at the time, to one of a totally different character.

About a week later—that is, on the 31st of October, Mr. Bright spoke at a *conversazione* given by the Mayor of Birmingham to the school teachers of that town. He referred to the work of the religious and secular teacher, and contended that the influence of the latter was infinitely greater than that of the former. It was not, however, mere book-learning that made a man a wise citizen, and he appealed to the teachers of Birmingham to set an example to the country of what could be done by developing the nobler traits of human nature, such as gentleness, uprightness, and unselfishness. Referring to the complaints of extravagant expenditure on educa-

tion, Mr. Bright said he 'would have nothing done for ostentation or for show ; but whatever could be done to make education real, to raise the character of our population, and exalt the sentiment of the people,—whatever could be done by the expenditure of money and the devotion and the earnest efforts of good men and good women, like the five hundred or six hundred he saw before him, that he would do and have done.'

One other address, and that an important one, delivered by Mr. Bright in 1879, remains to be dealt with. On the 18th of December he attended a banquet given to Mr. T. B. Potter, M.P., on his return to Rochdale after a visit to the United States. After dwelling at some length on the vastness of the territory and resources of the United States, Mr. Bright said it might be asked, 'What has this great nation done?' Well, they had done a good many things. They had built within the last fifty years not less than 80,000 miles of railway. They had during the last twenty years overthrown the gigantic and intolerable evil of slavery, at an enormous cost of blood and of treasure; and in the doing of it they had built up a very large public debt. But the moment the war was over they disbanded their armies; they set themselves steadily to raise their taxes and their revenues; they began to pay off their debt, and in thirteen or fourteen years they had paid off more than a hundred and fifty millions of debt, and by improving their credit by these payments, so that they could borrow more cheaply, they had reduced the amount of interest payable by the Government to those who had lent them money by an amount not less than eighteen millions a year. Mr. Bright continued as follows:—

'There is, no doubt, a great difference between the United States and countries in Europe, with the exception of one great country—France. They differ from us in sobriety. It is quite true Mr. Potter said he only saw four drunken people in America. Well, but he did not see one emperor. Call it empress or king or queen, or imperial or royal,—these institutions are not the foremost in America; and I have no doubt where men are not intelligent enough and moral enough to maintain a Government like they have in the United States, they may in some particulars still possess great benefits. I think that Mr. Shawcross or Mr. Potter, or both perhaps, said that they had no great army. There are persons who come to England from Germany, France, and Russia who are surprised, and perhaps delighted, to find so few soldiers here compared with some of the European nations. In America they

disbanded their great army of a million of men; they have now a force of about 25,000 men. It is not maintained for the purpose of war abroad—nor is it maintained for the purpose of suppressing liberty at home; and yet there is no country which is more universally respected throughout the globe than the United States of America; and there is no country where, on the whole, the laws are better observed and order more steadily maintained. Another thing in which they differ from us is this: they have, as I believe, almost no political treaties. Washington, their first great President, advised them to have no political treaties,—commercial treaties if you like, as much trade as you can have with all countries. They have not followed his advice in that so much as I should like; but in regard to political treaties, in the main they have followed his advice; and yet I believe there is no country with whom other countries are more friendly at this moment than the United States.'

They had no bishops, and no great favoured Church organisation, but he (Mr. Bright) did not commiserate them in that. They had also no land monopoly; they had not preferred, as we have preferred in this country, to maintain a thousand great houses and great properties, when we might have had hundreds of thousands of comfortable and happy homesteads adorning the land.

Mr. Bright nevertheless admitted that the American tariff was 'barbarous;' but it was not long since we had a tariff as bad as the United States, and we had a tariff that actually starved our people. Their tariff did nothing of the kind. They had so much food that they were sending it over here by hundreds of shiploads, and their people did not feel their tariff with the sort of pressure in every household that we felt our tariff in this country; and therefore the hostility to it, and the desire to get rid of it or amend it, was not so keen and universal as it was in this country before our Corn Laws were abolished. The Americans, however, were a people of great common sense, and he believed that before long the farmers throughout the Union would find that the protection under which they sell everything in the cheapest and buy everything in the dearest market was a system they would no longer support. He did not hope much from the conviction of the Protectionists themselves, but he trusted to the great heart and the great mind of the American nation. Mr. Bright concluded by saying what a grand thing it would be if England and all her colonies and dependencies—including the colonies of the United States—attaining altogether to a population of nearly four hundred millions, would adopt the principle of Free

Trade, and set that great example to the world which the world before long must inevitably follow. The influence on the rest of mankind would be enormous. 'With the fall of tariffs by the union of peoples through Free Trade between nations,—with the fall of tariffs, I say, we shall find also that there will be a fall of the military system which now oppresses all the nations of the earth, and which even in this country, in my opinion, dishonours and rejects the Christianity which we profess.'

We have now reached the close of that remarkable series of addresses which Mr. Bright has delivered in recent years upon political, social, and educational questions. There is no one, be he a supporter or be he an opponent of the right hon. gentleman, who will not, in following these addresses, have discovered much material for thought, and it may be some ideas, which, if translated into action, would redound to the advantage and the glory of our common country.

In closing this chapter we record with regret a heavy domestic calamity which befell Mr. Bright in the year 1878, by the death of his wife. Mrs. Bright died suddenly, on the 13th of May, at their residence of One Ash. On the previous day she was in her usual state of health, and attended the meeting at the Friends' chapel. On the morning of the 13th she was seized with apoplexy, became instantly unconscious, and died in a few minutes. Mr. Bright was in London at the time, but a telegram being immediately sent to him, he arrived at Rochdale in the evening. On the day succeeding Mrs. Bright's death Her Majesty the Queen sent a telegram from Windsor Castle to Rochdale, expressing her deep sympathy with Mr. Bright in his bereavement. Expressions of sympathy also poured in from all quarters upon Mr. Bright, and from many public bodies.

Mrs. Bright's remains were interred in the burial-ground of the Friends' meeting-house, Rochdale, on the 16th of May. In addition to the family and friends, Messrs. Bright's workpeople attended the funeral. As the coffin was borne to the grave it was followed by the mourners, at the head of whom was Mr. Bright, with his youngest son on one side, and his sister, Mrs. M'Laren, on the other. The

Friends have no regularly appointed burial service, the last sad offices for the dead being spontaneously performed. The interment on this occasion was touchingly simple. Precisely at noon the body was lowered into its final resting-place. The coffin, on which were placed three floral wreaths, bore a memorial tablet, with the inscription, 'Margaret Elizabeth Bright, died 13th May, 1878, aged 58 years.' As the body descended the sobs of some of the mourners were very audible. One who witnessed the melancholy ceremony states that Mr. J. B. Braithwaite, barrister, of London, in a voice indistinct from emotion, delivered—not a prayer over the dead, whose life was a closed book in the keeping of her Maker—but words of consolation to the living. Meanwhile Mr. Bright was so overcome with emotion that he clasped his son round the neck and leaned upon him for support. Mr. W. E. Turner, of Liverpool, gave utterance to the thought which the occasion inspired, taking several passages of Scripture for his theme. Mr. Bright then walked to the edge of the grave, and looked down upon the coffin with that lingering look which marks the reluctance of the bereaved finally to part with the beloved dead. The assembly afterwards retired into the meeting-house, where further exhortation and prayer were offered, and finally the whole of those present engaged in silent prayer.

The sympathy expressed with Mr. Bright in his profound sorrow was most widespread, extending as well through the ranks of his political antagonists as through those of his more immediate friends in private and public life.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

*MR. BRIGHT AND THE UNITED STATES.*

Letter from President Hayes to Mr. Bright : Invitation to Visit the United States.—  
Mr. Bright's Reply.



FOR many years there was an almost universal desire on the part of American citizens that Mr. Bright should visit the United States, where he would assuredly have received such a welcome as has rarely been accorded to any statesman by any people.

The visit, however, was never paid ; but in connection with this matter, and as an interesting sequel to Chapter XIX., we are enabled to publish the following hitherto unpublished correspondence between the late President of the United States and Mr. Bright. The first letter, from President Hayes, is as follows :—

‘EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON,  
*July 14, 1879.*

‘MY DEAR SIR,—The people of this country have from time to time indulged the hope, that your public duties at home might admit of your paying a visit to this kindred nation across the sea, and that your personal inclinations might not dissuade you from gratifying this hope. I need not say that at any time this many years your eminence in the public life of your own country would have ensured you a most cordial reception from our people. It will not, I am sure, seem either unnatural or displeasing to you that this title to our respect should be heightened by the appreciation of the great value to us of your opinions and their courageous maintenance\* during the

stress upon our Constitution and free Government, through which we have now, it may be hoped, completely passed.

‘I trust that an impression I have received that you are now entertaining the purpose of making this visit is well founded. It will give Mrs. Hayes and myself the greatest pleasure to receive you as our guest at Washington, at such time and as long as may comport with your own comfort and convenience; and you will find in all parts of the country a disposition to make your stay with us in all respects agreeable to your own wishes in respect to the measure and the modes of our hospitality.—I am, my dear Sir, very truly yours,

‘R. B. HAYES.

‘The Right Hon. John Bright, M.P.’

The following was Mr. Bright’s reply to this invitation :—

‘ONE ASH, ROCHDALE,

*August 14, 1879.*

‘MY DEAR SIR,—I have received your very kind letter of the 14th of July. The delay in acknowledging the receipt of it, and in replying to it, has arisen from my wish not to write hastily what might be an unexpected, if not an ungracious, answer.

‘I regret very much that I have not in years that are gone visited the United States; my public occupations and the circumstances or conditions of my home life have interfered with my wishes, and I have not been able to cross the Atlantic. And now, when your letter reaches me, I feel unable to avail myself of your great kindness, and to accept the great honour you offer me. I seem to have reached the age when voyages and travel have not only lost their charm, but are become burdensome even to the thought, and when I dare not undertake to meet the expressions of goodwill which I am assured would await me from my friends in your country. I have suffered much during the past year from the heaviest of all domestic bereavements, and I have lost, for a time at least, the spirit and the energy which are needful to make a visit to America useful or pleasant.

‘You refer to the course I took during the great trial through

which your country passed from 1860 to 1865. I was anxious that your continent should be the home of freedom, and that, as respects your country and my own, although we are two nations, we should be only one people. Hence I rejoice now in your union, your freedom, and your growing influence and prosperity.

‘I know not if I may ever visit your great country ; I should be sanguine now to expect it. But whether I do or not, I shall ever feel grateful for the kindness shown to me by so many of her people, and for the unexpected honour which your letter has conferred upon me.

‘May I thank Mrs. Hayes and yourself for the invitation to be your guest at Washington, and deeply regret that I am not able to accept the hospitality you so kindly offer me.

‘Wishing you all success and honour in your great office,—I am, with profound respect, very sincerely yours,

‘JOHN BRIGHT.

‘The Hon. R. B. Hayes,

The President, Washington, U.S.A.’



## CHAPTER XXX.

*PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES—1875-80.*

Mr. Gladstone's Temporary Retirement from the Liberal Leadership.—Lord Hartington elected as his Successor.—The Session of 1875.—Dr. Kenealy and the Tichborne Claimant.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—Dr. Kenealy's Motion against the Judges.—A Singular Division.—Mr. Bright on the Burials Bill.—The Prince of Wales's Visit to India.—The Irish Franchise.—Elementary Education.—Women's Suffrage.—The Sunday Liquor Traffic in Ireland.—The County Franchise.—Mr. Bright on Parliamentary Reporting —Capital Punishment.—On Indian Famines.—Settlement of the Burials Question.—The Management of King Edward the Sixth's Grammar-School, Birmingham.—Indian Debate in 1879.—The Bright Clauses in the Irish Land Act.—Mr. Bright on Agricultural Depression.—Motion on the Irish Franchise in 1880.—Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Local Option Resolution.



SHORTLY before the opening of the session of 1875, Mr. Gladstone retired from the leadership of the Liberal party—though happily the retirement was only of a temporary character. Mr. Gladstone's decision, which naturally caused great regret to the party, was made known to Earl Granville in a letter dated the 12th of January. There were many who regarded it as a stupendous misfortune that Mr. Gladstone should thus retire from the service of the country which owed to him more than to any man living, and at least as much as to any Premier in her constitutional history. Warm tributes of sympathy and regard were paid to him on all hands; and the press, with remarkable unanimity, deplored his decision, while not challenging his right to spend the closing years of his life as he wished.

The Liberals were considerably embarrassed in their choice of a leader, for there were many statesmen of the second rank

who had perhaps almost equal claims to the post. Various names were mentioned, but those whose qualifications were most widely canvassed were Lord Hartington and Mr. Forster. A meeting of Liberal members was held at the Reform Club, on the 3rd of February, for the purpose of electing Mr. Gladstone's successor. Before this date, however, Mr. Forster had formally declined the candidature. All difficulties were consequently removed out of the way. At the meeting Mr. C. P. Villiers proposed, and Mr. Samuel Morley seconded, the election of the Marquis of Hartington. The motion having been adopted unanimously, Lord Frederick Cavendish responded for his brother; and Mr. Bright, who was chairman of the meeting, passed a warm and hearty eulogium upon the new Liberal leader.

There were one or two singular episodes in the session of 1875 in connection with the notorious Tichborne Claimant and his advocate, Dr. Kenealy. Having been elected for Stoke-upon-Trent, Dr. Kenealy appeared in the House for the purpose of taking his seat. He was unaccompanied, however, by two other members, as is always the case upon the introduction of a new member, and after some discussion this formality was waived. He had not been long in the House before he brought forward a number of notices, questions, and petitions having reference to the Tichborne trial. One of these, called the Prittlewell petition, not only prayed for a free pardon for 'that unhappy nobleman now languishing in prison,' but contained direct charges of unfairness against the three judges and abuse of the Speaker. Mr. Disraeli moved the dismissal of the petition; but some members were for treating it with contempt. Under great pressure, Dr. Kenealy rose, and said that, having given the notice, he was only waiting to be supported by more petitions from the country before bringing forward a definite motion against the judges.

Mr. Bright, who had acted in a friendly spirit towards Dr. Kenealy since his entry into the House, now delivered a severe philippic against the hon. member. He said that his present course could not be tolerated. 'The hon. gentleman,' he observed, 'has no right to come down to the House and give a notice

of this character, to remove it to some other day, then to some other day, and after that to let it remain on the paper without any day being fixed, and then to leave London to visit towns and other parts of the country, and there to make his statement of the question—I will not say to inflame the minds of the people of this country, I will not say to make charges which are false—I will say rather to make statements which he believes it his duty to make. It is not right to make such statements—I will not say to defame, but to charge eminent judges with unfairness, and to create in the mind of the people a belief that men upon their trial before the judges and a jury of this country cannot hope for fair, complete, and open justice. I say he has no right to do that, and to leave a notice of that kind on the paper week after week and month after month; and I think the House ought to insist that a question of this nature, upon which so much hangs—a question as to the judgment of the House upon the character of eminent judges—ought not to be left undecided. The House ought to take some steps by which it shall either be adjudged or got rid of for ever. I think the hon. member for Stafford (Mr. Macdonald) made a manly declaration. He made an appeal to the hon. member for Stoke which he cannot disregard.' Amidst general cheering from both sides of the House, Mr. Bright continued: 'I protest against this question being left over. If the hon. member had given notice that he was about to bring a vote of censure against a member of the Government, the First Minister would say, "This cannot be allowed to remain week after week. It must be decided. The Government enjoys the confidence of the House or it does not." But it seems to me even more important if you have three of the most eminent judges of the land, and heap upon them charges of the most grave character. I say that the man who makes those charges, and who hesitates to come forward and, to the best of his power, substantiate them, at any rate will have no right to say anything against the judges; for, however evil may be their character, I suspect his will not bear examination. I conclude by saying—

and I say it with no unfriendliness to the hon. member for Stoke—I think I have a fair right to appeal to him to answer my question, and to state to the House whether it is his intention immediately, or on the first convenient day—and I hope the House will be ready to make way for him—to bring this matter before the House, so that it may be fairly discussed; for I am at least as anxious as he is that justice should be done, and that the great mass of the people of this country, whether they take his view or the view of the majority of this House, should have another opportunity of correcting their opinion, and of coming, it may be, to a just decision upon a question which has excited so many of them.'

Driven to bay, Dr. Kenealy was at length forced to bring the question to an issue, and this he did on the 23d of April, in the shape of a motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the conduct of the trial at bar of the Tichborne case. The mover, after going into the details of the case, especially attacked Lord Chief-Justice Cockburn, charging him with misbehaviour so gross as to necessitate a new trial in the interests of truth and justice. The Attorney-General replied to Dr. Kenealy, showing that he had entirely failed to make out a case for a Royal Commission. Mr. Disraeli described the affair as 'altogether an absurd, preposterous, and most flimsy business.' It was Mr. Bright, however, who most completely exploded the hon. member's charges. He went into the merits of the case on which the Claimant was convicted, and by a straightforward but pitiless and irresistible logic showed how weak was the defence, and how inevitable the conclusion that the Claimant was a rank impostor. 'It is a great public injury,' he observed, 'it is a great wrong, that gentlemen of education, and occupying the position of members of this House, should seek to convince persons who could not by any possibility have had so good an opportunity of judging of the matter as the judges and jury whose conduct is condemned,—I say it is a great evil to teach such persons what I believe to be utterly untrue, that the judges were partial and corrupt, and that the jury were mistaken in the view which they took. Sir, I can take no such view. I can take

no part in such conduct. I would uphold the institutions of this country, in the main, as they exist with regard to the administration of justice ; I think the poorest in the land has at least as great an interest in that being done as the richest in the land ; and it is because I think this that I cannot for a moment think of giving my vote in favour of the proposition of the hon. member for Stoke.'

The division which followed is probably unparalleled in the annals of the House of Commons. The motion was rejected by 433 votes against 1,—Dr. Kenealy's solitary supporter being Major O'Gorman. The hon. member's co-teller was Mr. Whalley, as ardent an admirer of and a believer in the Claimant as he was a hater of the Pope.

During this session Mr. Bright spoke on the occasion of the second reading of Mr. Osborne Morgan's Burials Bill. He pointed out that all persons had a right to use the parochial burying-ground when their friends came to be buried. These grounds were the property of the parish—they were plots of ground in which the parishioners generally had a pecuniary interest. But those who dissented from the Church could only be buried in the parish graveyard upon certain conditions. They must have a certain service read over them, or none at all. He asked why this test should be imposed upon one-half of the population. They had abolished tests for holding offices, and many other tests—then why adhere to this?—for it was no other than a test. Having described the simple burial service of the Friends, where any one was allowed to pray or to offer a word of exhortation if he felt it his duty to do so, Mr. Bright said : ' But if this were done in one of your graveyards—if, for example, such a thing were done there, and a member of my sect, or a Baptist, an Independent, or a Wesleyan came to be interred in one of your graveyards, and if some God-fearing and good man there spoke some word of exhortation, or on his knees offered a prayer to God, is there one of you on this side of the House or on that, or one of your clergymen, or any thoughtful and Christian man connected with your Church, who would dare in the sight of Heaven to condemn that, or to interfere with it by force of law? The proposition as reduced to a simple case like that is

monstrous and intolerable, and I believe the time will come when men will never believe that such a thing could have been seriously discussed in the English House of Commons.' They were doing harm to the Church of England by maintaining this test. Why should not the English Nonconformists have full toleration in this matter, when the exclusive system was unknown in Scotland, and had been abolished in Ireland? Ill effects had been prophesied from the abolition of Church-rates, but these ill effects had not come. Voluntary effort had done more for the Church than any law that Parliament could ever discuss or pass. This was a political question, as the Church-rate was a political question; and if they could once get rid of party discussion, and consider this matter as men—whether Nonconformists or Churchmen—anxious for that brotherly kindness and that peace inculcated upon all men alike by the precepts of their common Christianity, they would have no difficulty in agreeing to the present bill.

Notwithstanding Mr. Bright's speech, however, which had a considerable effect upon the House, the bill was lost by the narrow majority of 14—the numbers being, for the second reading, 234; against, 248.

When Mr. Disraeli proposed the grant in connection with the Prince of Wales's visit to India, Mr. Bright spoke in the course of the discussion, and said that as the visit had received the consent of the Queen, and had been considered and approved by Ministers, he was willing to believe, as he most strongly hoped, that the visit was a wise one, and one that would tend in the main to useful purposes, both for England and India. As to the character of the visit, the Prince could not go to India with a single portmanteau and a carpet bag; and he (Mr. Bright) inclined to the mode of travelling which the Government had proposed. If it was any other of the sons of the Queen, the case would be somewhat different; but the Prince of Wales was the heir-apparent to the throne of these kingdoms, and they could not, in his travels through India, divest him of that character and that position. He ought to go in such state as should commend itself to the ideas, the sympathies, and wishes of the population he was about to see. The Prince could

not make the people of India forget that they were a subject population, but there were influences which he might employ, and there were circumstances which might arise, that might have a beneficial effect upon the public mind in that country. The Prince was kindly, courteous, and generous, whereas the English rulers in India were not always kind and courteous to the native population. 'I rose,' concluded Mr. Bright, 'for the purpose of saying that although I had some doubts, and although it is impossible to say and believe that the journey of the Prince of Wales will turn the current of feeling on great political questions in the minds of the natives of India, yet I think that in all probability by his conduct—his personal conduct,—his kindness, his courtesy, his generosity, and his sympathy with that great people over whom it may at no distant period be his tremendous responsibility to rule, he may leave behind him memories that may be of exceeding value, and equal in influence to the greatest measures of State policy which any Government could propound.'

There were many questions of importance introduced in the session of 1876 upon which Mr. Bright addressed the House. The subject of Reform for Ireland was brought forward by Mr. Meldon on the 28th of March, upon a motion for the assimilation of the borough franchise in England and Ireland. Mr. Meldon showed, from rating and other causes, how large numbers of the Irish people, especially in the towns, were disfranchised. While opposing the motion, Sir M. H. Beach admitted the future necessity of dealing with the franchise in Ireland. Mr. Bright concluded the debate in a very effective speech, which showed that he had lost none of his power of commanding the attention of the House. It was remarked, indeed, that the brief speeches which he delivered on the Burials Bill in the former session and on this occasion were among the most successful of his shorter oratorical efforts. In supporting Mr. Meldon's motion Mr. Bright showed that household suffrage had not been a terrible thing for England, and that it could not be a dangerous thing for Ireland. 'I believe,' he said, 'that if a measure of this kind were passed it would have the effect in Ireland—it must inevitably have the effect of teaching the Irish people that the

Imperial Parliament is not only not afraid of them, but actually invites their co-operation. It invites every man of them, every householder in boroughs, to take an interest in the political questions which are constantly debated in this House; and I am satisfied that, if you ask them to become partners in the discussions and deliberations of this assembly, it would make them think that it will not be necessary for them to have a small Parliament of their own in Ireland, seeing that this greater Parliament is willing to do them speedy and substantial justice. It remains to be true—though all the officials in the world think it worth while to call it in question—that justice done by the Government and Parliament to any portion of the population, be it the most remote, be it the most abject, still that measure of justice is never lost. It is compensated to the power that grants it, be it monarch or be it Parliament, by greater affection, by greater and firmer allegiance to the law, and by the growth of all those qualities and virtues by which a great and durable nation is distinguished.’ To Mr. Bright’s advocacy of the resolution was probably due the closeness of the division, the Government escaping defeat only by the small majority of 13. The numbers were—for the motion, 166; against, 179.

A bill to amend the Elementary Education Act had been promised by the Government for this session, but in consequence of the protracted debates on the Royal Titles Bill it could not be introduced in the Commons until the middle of May. Meanwhile Mr. Dixon, one of the members for Birmingham, brought in an Elementary Education Bill of his own, and the debate on the second reading took place on the 5th of April. The principal objects of the measure were to enforce universal compulsory attendance at school, and to establish universal compulsory school boards. Mr. Bright said he agreed with much that had been urged during the debate against giving too high an education to the children of the labouring classes, and laid it down that it would be sufficient to teach children to read so as to comprehend what they read, to write so that what they wrote could be read, and so much arithmetic as would enable them to keep their accounts. The opposition to school boards he held to be a mere



hobgoblin, and as the system had succeeded so admirably in towns, there was no reason why it should not be extended to the rural districts. As to the expense, everything cost something, and the people could not be educated for nothing; while the horror of increasing local taxation was an entire mistake, which was due, he believed, to ignorance and political motives. The school board system had hitherto been most efficacious in carrying out the principle of compulsion, which seemed now to be generally accepted; but he was not wedded to it, and if the Vice-President would only state what other plan he had to propose, he promised him an impartial consideration of it from the Liberal side. Lord Sandon, in closing the debate, protested against the conjunction of the cause of education with what he declared to be the fatal principle of universal school boards. Mr. Dixon's bill was lost by 281 votes to 160. The Government bill, which was introduced at a later period, led to many warm debates, its main proposals being considered 'reactionary' by the Opposition. The strongest contest arose over an amendment by Mr. Pell—accepted by the Government—providing for the dissolution of all school boards which possessed neither schools nor sites. Mr. Bright said that if the clause passed it would be widely accepted as the signal for the reopening of a question which was settled in 1870, and it would stir up intolerance and hostility in many parishes. The clause, however, was carried, the Government being supported all through on this question by an obedient majority. In Committee Mr. Bright made another attempt to modify the objectionable new clause of Mr. Pell, by proposing to add to it the words, 'In every case where a school board shall be dissolved under this clause all the powers conferred upon it by and under the Elementary Education Act, 1870, shall be transferred to and continued under the local authority of the parish or district for educational purposes created under this Act.' Mr. Bright said that if the state of things which this clause would produce in districts where school boards were abolished could be made general throughout the country, the whole object of Parliamentary legislation on this great question

would be thwarted and entirely put an end to. Gentlemen opposite had never advocated justice to the Dissenting population of England and Wales; the time would come, however, when the judgment of Parliament, backed by an intelligent and free people, would reverse the unfavourable judgment to which that night they might come. The Government opposed the amendment, and it was rejected by 100 votes to 63. The Bill eventually passed through both Houses, and became law.

Mr. Bright is opposed to the extension of the suffrage to women. On the motion for the second reading of Mr. Forsyth's Women's Disabilities Removal Bill, taken on the 26th of April 1876, he spoke against the measure. He confessed that he had changed his vote on this question, for he had voted with Mr. Mill in 1867. He had not really changed his opinion, however, though on one occasion he had voted with Mr. Mill out of general sympathy for him rather than from a conviction that he was right on this question. He thus concluded a very forcible speech :—

‘My sympathies have always been in favour of a wide suffrage. They are so at this moment, and I grieve very much that a measure should be submitted to this House in favour of the extension of the suffrage to which I cannot give my support. But I confess I am unwilling, for the sake of women themselves, to introduce them into the contest of our Parliamentary system, to bring them under the necessity of canvassing themselves or being canvassed by others. (Hear, hear.) I think they would lose much of that, or some of that, which is best that they now possess, and that they would gain no good of any kind from being mingled or mixed with Parliamentary contests and the polling-booth. I should vote for this measure if I were voting solely in the interests of the men; I shall vote against it, I believe with perfect honesty, believing that in doing so I am serving the interests of women themselves. (Cheers.) I recollect that an hon. member who voted for this bill last year, in conversation with me next day, said he had very great doubts upon the matter, because he believed that the best women were against it. Well, I find wherever I go that all the best women seem to be against this bill. If the House believes that it cannot vote justly for our mothers, our sisters, our wives, and our daughters, the House may abdicate and pass this bill; but I believe that Parliament cannot be otherwise—unless it be in ignorance—than just to the women of this country, with whom we are so intimately allied. Believing that, and having these doubts—doubts which are stronger even than I have been able to express, and doubts which have come upon me stronger and stronger the more I have considered this question—I am obliged, differing from many of those whom I care for, and whom I love, to give my vote in opposition to this measure.’ (Cheers.)

The bill was lost by a majority of 87, the numbers being—for the second reading, 152; against, 239.

On the 12th of May 1876 Mr. R. Smyth brought forward a resolution in the House of Commons proposing to stop the sale of intoxicating liquors on Sunday in Ireland. The hon. member showed by statistics that drunkenness was increasing in Ireland, and that this measure was universally desired. Sir M. Hicks-Beach, on behalf of the Government, proposed a compromise. He offered, if Mr. Smyth would withdraw his motion, to recommend the further restriction of the hours of opening on Sundays to two to five in the country, and two to seven in towns. Mr. Bright gave his warm adhesion to the resolution. He considered that the unanimity of all classes on this question was unparalleled, and described the proposed Government compromise as a mere nibbling at a great evil, and a falling back from the offer of the previous year. 'The Irish people plead in no uncertain voice, but say distinctly what you should do on this occasion. Those who resist are not the people of England, but the publicans of England. Have we not all received papers from English publicans and their associations? Do they not tell us what we should do in this matter? Have they not told Her Majesty's Ministers in no uncertain voice what they ought to do in this matter? It has come to this—Government must choose this day whom you will serve. Will you serve the conspiracy of the vendors of drink in England, or will you obey the will and the eloquent voice of the whole people of Ireland?' Mr. Gladstone also pressed the House not to neglect the unanimous desire of the Irish people; and on a division the resolution was carried against the Government by 224 votes to 167. The result was hailed with loud cheering by the Opposition. A bill was afterwards introduced, founded upon the resolution; but after passing its second reading it was talked out at a later stage by Mr. Callan, for which feat he was generally and severely condemned.

Mr. Trevelyan's motion, in 1876, for the extension of the county franchise, brought forward on the 30th of May, was

opposed by Mr. Lowe, who said he feared that in the extremity of our prosperity and happiness we should not be satisfied until we had pulled down by our own hand the noblest fabric of liberty and justice that human hands ever raised or human folly ever destroyed. Mr. Bright, in supporting the motion, said that some of the top stones of the noble fabric referred to by Mr. Lowe were the very stones against which the right hon. gentleman had protested ten years before. Having traced the recent history of Reform, Mr. Bright said it was admitted by every one that the results of what was done in 1867 with regard to the borough franchise had been satisfactory, and given no cause whatever for alarm. If they now extended the same suffrage to the counties, it would be the best means of putting an end to an apprehended agitation for manhood or universal suffrage. The ignorance of the agricultural population was lessening every day; their independence was increasing; and there was a gradual but general movement in the direction of asking that they should be placed on an equality with their fellow-countrymen in the towns. 'It is not a party question,' said Mr. Bright. 'There is scarcely a member on the other side of the House with whom I have spoken on this question who has not said that it cannot be put off for very long; and when the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government proposes that it shall be done, no doubt it will be accepted and adopted by an overwhelming majority even in this House. And when it is done a great thing will be done. We shall have the counties put in as favourable a position for legislation on their behalf as the boroughs occupy now. The freedom of the towns will be extended to the counties, and we shall have what I fear is a great amount of social tyranny in the counties broken up. We shall have what I have described as the paralysis of half the political interests and power of the country removed and healed, and we shall have the industry, the intelligence, and the freedom of both town and country brought to combine in the election of a really free Parliament, that shall be a credit and a permanent safeguard to a great and a 'free people.' Mr. Disraeli opposed the motion, and it was defeated by a majority

of 99, the numbers being—for Mr. Trevelyan's resolution, 165; against, 264.

Twice during the session of 1877 Mr. Bright spoke on questions which excited considerable interest. The first of these speeches was delivered in connection with a proposal made by Mr. Hanbury Tracy, that the debates of the House should be officially reported. It was shown during the discussion that, with the exception of the *Times* and the *Standard*, the newspapers were ceasing to report the debates at length, that nothing was reported after 12.30 A.M., and that the public appetite for debates was diminishing. Mr. Gladstone supported the proposal, on the ground that reporting was declining. Mr. Bright took a similar view. He said that the reports of the debates in Parliament were not only much shorter than they once were, but also that they were much worse. It was therefore advisable to have an inquiry into the matter. Newspapers found their profit very much more from what they contained of advertisements than of Parliamentary debates; therefore speeches went to the wall. He did not, however, believe that there was less interest now than formerly in reading Parliamentary debates; but, except on very stirring occasions, the newspaper record of the debates was very deficient. The grievance would increase with every year, and they would be compelled before long to make the inquiry asked for. Members would require as an historical record, and for their own reference, some record of the debates more satisfactory than the present lame and impotent reports. He did not agree with Mr. Beresford-Hope that an adequate report of the debates would vastly enlarge the extent of talking; but if there should be a disposition on the part of any member to speak too often and too long, the House had its remedy in its own hands. A committee would devise the best mode of solving the present difficulty. Sir. S. Northcote opposed the motion, on the ground that it would tend to multiply speeches addressed to constituents, &c.; and in the end the proposition was defeated by a vote of 152 to 28. Many of the newspapers, in commenting upon this decision, expressed an opinion that the existing reports were ample for the requirements of their readers; but some of the ablest of the weekly journals feared that the tendency of the

House to become 'an unreported debating club' might result in weakening its hold upon the country.

The other occasion on which Mr. Bright rose this session was in connection with the abolition of capital punishment. Sir J. Eardley Wilmot having introduced a motion for the reconsideration of the law of murder, Mr. Pease moved an amendment for the abolition of the punishment of death. The latter hon. gentleman brought forward some remarkable statistics in support of his amendment. Mr. Bright—who, as we have seen, had already delivered many speeches during his career upon this question—once more spoke eloquently against capital punishment, and upon the special horror of the English method. He observed that in this respect our law had always been more barbarous and more cruel than that of any Christian State of which he had been able to inform himself. We committed a mistake which, a hundred years to come, men would point to as one of the most extraordinary mistakes a Legislature could commit, when we endeavoured to promote the sacredness of human life and the reverence for human life by destroying it in cold blood, and by one of the most barbarous methods which the most barbarous nations ever employed. Mr. Bright argued that the substitution of private for public execution had only given a new field to the reporters. In former times they told us all about the crowd, and how the street was filled with spectators; but now, in a space perhaps not half the size of that room, they saw every line of the convict's countenance, they saw his troubled eyes, the pallor on his cheek, the terror in every limb; and all that was given, with the embellishments which newspaper writers were so well able to add; and these details were carried into every house. He believed that the executions were exerting an influence as evil, sometimes even more evil, upon the public mind than they did in times when they were enacted under the canopy of heaven and before the faces of thousands of the people. 'I have spoken,' said Mr. Bright, 'to a Home Secretary on questions of this nature, and I have told him, in respect of a particular case, "You know if you hang this man there is no other Christian country in the world in which he would be hung." He did not deny it,—it was a matter notorious; and I

have seen him burst into tears ; I have seen the tears rolling down his cheeks, and himself greatly agitated with the burden upon his conscience, which he knew not how to shift from it, the law having compelled him to decide this case,—his sympathy carrying him one way, and his fear of not doing what the law required compelling him the other. The time, I say, is surely coming when we shall have a Home Secretary who shall revolt against the terrible duty thus imposed upon him, and when we shall have a Parliament, too, which shall raise itself to the height of this great argument, and will believe that Christian law is of more worth than the barbarism that comes only with heathen times. And I hope the time will come when we shall show to all other nations that whatever England has been heretofore in the barbarous nature of her punishments, now at last she takes another course, and instead of being the last she will be foremost in that path which leads from the blind cruelties of the past to the wise and just mercies of the future. With all my heart and soul I shall give my vote in favour of the amendment of my hon. friend the member for South Durham.' At the close of the debate the House rejected both the original motion and the amendment.

Early in the session of 1878 Lord George Hamilton, Under Secretary of State for India, brought forward a motion connected with the construction of public works in India. Mr. Fawcett moved an amendment further to inquire into the causes and the mitigation of frequent famines, as well as the burdensome taxation imposed upon the people of India. Mr. Bright spoke during the discussion. 'Talk of this savage and destructive war now waging in the east of Europe,' he said ; 'we hear of thousands being slaughtered ; but all that that war has done, and all that the wars of the past ten years have done, has not been equal, in the destruction of human life, to the destruction caused by the famines which have occurred in the great dependency of the English Crown in India.' Having recapitulated recent history on this question, and referred to his own efforts, he concluded by remarking, 'If famine comes from want of water, clearly to get rid of famine you must have water. You cannot have water except by works of irrigation. You have the rain from

heaven; you have the great rivers; and you have a great Government, which has conquered the country, and which, having conquered it, at least ought to exercise all the powers of its intellect for the purpose of saving its people from this suffering and this ruin, and ought to save this Parliament and this country from the degradation and humiliation of allowing it to be known throughout the world that millions of the subjects of the Crown in India, in the course of ten years, perish by famine, which great engineers and men of character and experience say positively might altogether have been prevented.' Mr. Fawcett withdrew his amendment upon Lord George Hamilton revising his resolution, which was now adopted by the House, as follows: 'That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report as to the expediency of constructing public works in India with money raised on loan, both as regards financial results and the prevention of famine.'

In the session of 1878 Mr. Osborne Morgan made another unsuccessful attempt to settle the Burials question, moving by way of resolution. Mr. Bright again spoke vigorously on the question, referring to the condition of panic into which the friends of the Established Church had thrown themselves, and insisting upon the groundlessness of their fears. The question, he said, was as good as won by the supporters of this measure, and the battle was pretty nearly as good as lost on the other. He demanded this act of justice on behalf of that half of the nation who believed themselves to be injured. The resolution was only lost by the narrow majority of 15, in a House composed of 469 members. This vexed question was at length set at rest by the passing of a bill in the session of 1880. When the second reading came on in this latter year Mr. Beresford-Hope moved the rejection of the bill. A long debate ensued, in the course of which Mr. Bright delivered a speech full of humour and pathos. As one of the daily journals observed, he was in a quiet and playful but most effective vein. Mr. Talbot had said something very stupid about Wales; and Mr. Bright retorted by a remark on his ignorance, which was more relished by the Ministerialists than by the member for Oxford. This was followed up by a similarly severe remark upon the 'grotesque' humour of Mr.



Beresford-Hope; and he made use of that gentleman's jokes to prove that the Conservatives were marching to portentous doom in the highest of spirits. An allusion to Mr. Mowbray led to the concluding observation as to the want of political education in the members for the universities, which elicited loud laughter at the expense of the said members. Mr. Bright denied the assertion that this bill led to disestablishment; and in pointing out how burial in the parish church might lead the surviving relative to affection for the parish church, he told—in beautiful language and a lowered voice that hushed the House—a story of an old man who used to visit every Sunday the grave of his wife. He left the general question of disestablishment to time, and finally urged acceptance of the bill for the sake of having a settlement of this vexatious question. He even professed his readiness to accept the clause which put him, as an unbaptized person, in the same category as suicides and criminals, rather than imperil the chances of the bill. The House felt that the time had come for a settlement of this long controversy, and the second reading of the bill was carried by 258 to 79. The result elicited loud cheering. The measure subsequently passed through both Houses and became law.

Mr. Meldon again brought forward, in the session of 1881, his proposition in favour of the assimilation of the borough franchise of Ireland with that of England. Mr. Bright said that all the policy and all the measures of the party opposite in respect to Ireland had failed, and all their foretellings and prophecies had proved false. He called upon the House to consent to the proposition now submitted to it. The division was a very narrow one, the resolution being only defeated by eight votes out of a total of 260.

On the 5th of March 1878 Mr. Bright drew the attention of the House of Commons to the scheme of the Endowed Schools Commissioners for the management of King Edward the Sixth's Grammar-School in Birmingham—one of the most flourishing institutions in the country. The right hon. gentleman proposed an address to Her Majesty, praying her to withhold her assent to the scheme. The point which he desired to call the attention of members to was the constitution of the governing body. The people of

Birmingham objected to the scheme of the Charity Commissioners on this amongst other grounds—that whereas the school had been free for three hundred years, it was now proposed to establish a system of fees. As to the governing body, what the corporation and the people of Birmingham objected to was that the majority, which by the scheme of 1873 was to be given to the corporation and the school board, was now reduced to a minority, the school board being entirely got rid of. The co-optative members were increased by one, and three members were to be appointed by Oxford, Cambridge, and London Universities. The public of Birmingham would prefer that the three proposed university members should be elected and appointed by the corporation. The course taken by the Charity Commissioners was humiliating and somewhat offensive to the town of Birmingham, whose corporation and institutions were in a flourishing condition. The motion was seconded by Mr. Chamberlain, who, after pointing out the public spirit in Birmingham, insisted that the town ought to have the management of its own school. Several members spoke against Mr. Bright's resolution, but it was further supported by Mr. Muntz. The hon. gentleman said the school was doing enormous good, and they were going to put a stop to it. His remark that it was useless to argue with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, seeing the majority at his back, was speedily justified, for the House decided against Mr. Bright's motion by a majority of 59.

India was a prominent topic of discussion in the session of 1879, and on the 18th of February Mr. Fawcett called attention to the inadequate control exercised over the revenues of the great Eastern dependency, and moved for a Committee to inquire into and report upon the operation of the Government of India Act, 1858, and subsequent enactments. The motion was discussed at length. Mr. Grant Duff denied that want of financial control was one of the evils from which India suffered; if there was anything wrong, it arose from errors in policy. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that if opportunity arose for the appointment of a Committee to inquire into the general administration of Indian affairs, such a thing might be advantageous, but he could not consent to an inquiry on the

basis of the present motion. Mr. Bright spoke with much power, regretting the decision of the Government not to grant the Committee, inasmuch as the condition of Indian affairs, pressing for the attention of the House and the Government, had been shown to be of the most serious character. The words of the motion, as he understood them, referred not merely to finance, but to the whole government of India, and the sooner the Committee was appointed the better. The difficulties of the position in India had been aggravated by the recent policy of the Government, and he was surprised at the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had sat at the feet of Mr. Gladstone, and who at least knew his multiplication table—though he had known some Ministers who did not—should ever have consented to it. Whatever changes it might be found necessary to introduce into the administration of India, he believed that reforms in India would be of more consequence than any changes which could be made in the form of the Home Government. He continued of the opinion, which he expressed many years ago, that it was impossible for a Viceroy, with half a dozen councillors, to govern the whole of India; the country ought to be divided into half a dozen independent Governments, each directly responsible to the Secretary of State at home. Though he did not agree with Mr. Fawcett as to the value of the Council, he voted for the motion because he understood it to apply to the whole of Indian administration. On a division, the motion was negatived by 139 to 100 votes.

On the House of Commons going into Committee of Supply on the 2nd of May 1879 Mr. Shaw-Lefevre moved a resolution asserting the expediency of legislating without further delay to increase the facilities offered by the Purchase clauses of the Irish Land Act. He pointed out that though the Purchase clauses of the Church Act had succeeded, those of the Land Act had been to a great extent a failure. This he attributed in a great measure to the fact that the working of the Act had been placed in the hands of persons who had no interest in its success. The most effectual remedy was for the State to step in and take the management. Mr. Gladstone said he hoped this would not be made a party question, for it was a moral,





social, and political claim, going to the heart of the Irish question. Many other members, chiefly Irish, having spoken, Mr. Bright rose and eulogised the Land Act, which he affirmed would never have been passed if both Houses had not been convinced of the dangerous condition of the country. At the same time he admitted that the Act had only been partial, and the remedy was incomplete, as it did not go to the origin of the evil. The disproportion between the numbers of the holders and owners of land in Ireland was so great as to be intolerable. The consequence was a growing claim for a greater security of tenure, and demands were made which were probably not altogether sound. This particular provision contained no new principle; it had been sanctioned by Parliament in 1870 without a division, and a measure might be carried this session which would tend to create a loyal and contented class of the population. Sir Stafford Northcote, on behalf of the Government, promised to make a proposal for removing some of the difficulties which impeded the operation of the Purchase clauses, and ultimately the resolution was agreed to.

On the 4th of July, in the same session, Mr. Chaplin moved for a Royal Commission to inquire into the depressed condition of the agricultural interest, and the causes to which it was owing; whether those causes were of a temporary or of a permanent character, and how far they had been created or could be remedied by legislation. Mr. T. Brassey seconded the motion, but said the exploded doctrines of Protection should be excluded from the discussion of the Commission. An animated debate arose, in the course of which Mr. Bright spoke. Without urging the Government to refuse the Commission, he charged the Conservatives with standing in fear of the English-speaking nation on the other side of the Atlantic. He did not suppose, however, that they wished to see the agricultural labourer go back to the position from which he had been raised by Free Trade; and he believed, as he hoped, that those who desired to return to that refuge of cowardice, idleness, and greed, the protective system, would be disappointed. Having complained of the silence of the proposers of this investigation as to what they expected from

it, Mr. Bright warned them that, the door being once opened, it could not be closed until complete inquiry had been made. If appointed, the Commission must inquire into the gigantic monopoly of the present ownership in land, and ascertain why landlords and farmers viewed with alarm, and even with terror, the arrival in this country of corn and cattle from places many thousand miles across the Atlantic. It would increase the price of land here, he was convinced, if the ancient, stupid, and mischievous legislation which embarrassed every step in dealing with it were abolished; and he demanded that this inquiry should be wide and open. Above all, he would break down the monopoly which had banished so much labour from the farms, and pauperised what remained. Ultimately Mr. Chaplin's motion was agreed to without a division.

The question of the Irish franchise was yet again brought before the House of Commons on the 17th of February 1880, when Mr. Meldon moved a resolution declaring that it deserved the immediate attention of Parliament. Mr. C. E. Lewis moved as an amendment that it was inexpedient to deal with the question. A prolonged debate ensued, in the course of which Sir W. Harcourt strongly condemned Mr. Lewis's attack upon the Irish people. The Attorney-General for Ireland said it was impossible to disturb the Irish franchise without raising the question of the redistribution of seats, and, on the whole, there was no urgency in this matter. Mr. Bright began a brief but spirited speech by remarking that these were the arguments by which household suffrage had been resisted in this country; and if there were no special agitation in Ireland on this question, it was one of a bundle of grievances which demanded redress. But the real reason why the party opposite resisted this extension of the franchise was, that they feared the opinions which would be represented, although those opinions, as he showed, were the natural result of long years of Conservative government. Mr. Meldon's motion did not, of course, commend itself to the Conservative party, and on a division it was negatived by 242 to 188.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson, who had frequently brought forward his Permissive Bill in the House of Commons, varied his course on the

Temperance question on the 6th of March 1880 by bringing forward a resolution in favour of local option. He acknowledged that he hoped to catch votes by his resolution, which simply meant that the people should be enabled to protect themselves from the evils of drinking. Mr. Burt seconded the motion; and Mr. Gladstone said he could not vote against it, though he had never yet heard of a plan to give effect to local option which it would not be premature at present to lay before Parliament. He regretted that the opportunity had been lost of trying the Gothenburg system. Amongst other speakers was Mr. Bright, who said he had always opposed the Permissive Bill, but it had disappeared, probably never to appear again; and he denied altogether that the House would be committed to that impossible measure by accepting this resolution. All that the house would do would be to express an opinion condemning the present system, suggesting a new one, and calling on the Government to submit a measure which would embody some kind of local control on the granting of licenses. The present system was admitted to be deficient; the magistrates were irresponsible, and in towns at least he thought the power might be transferred to the corporations. When the House divided the resolution was negatived by 248 to 134.

This was the last of Mr. Bright's appearances in Opposition, for three days after this debate Parliament was dissolved, under circumstances which will be detailed in the ensuing chapter.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

*THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1880.*

Causes which led to the Dissolution of 1880.—Opening of the Birmingham Liberal Club.—Speeches of Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Bright.—Brilliant Attack on the Government.—Meeting of the Birmingham Junior Liberal Association.—Address by Mr. Bright.—The Zulu and Afghan Wars.—Dissolution of Parliament.—Manifesto by the Premier.—English Ascendency in Europe.—The Liberal Leaders and Lord Beaconsfield's Letter to the Duke of Marlborough.—The General Election.—The Contest in Birmingham.—Reception and Speeches of Mr. Bright.—Interview with the Licensed Victuallers.—The County Franchise and the Land Question.—Result of the Poll at Birmingham.—Great Liberal Triumph.—Enormous Liberal Majority in the Country.—Mr. Gladstone called to Power.—Mr. Bright again accepts Office.—Re-election with Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham.



GENERAL belief in the early dissolution of Parliament had been current before this important step was formally announced by the Premier. The Beaconsfield Administration had been called to power ostensibly on two leading grounds—one of a negative and the other of a positive character. With regard to the former of these, it was understood that the new Ministry would abandon what had been described as the 'harassing domestic policy' of Mr. Gladstone's Government; while as to the second, it would assume a definite and spirited course on foreign affairs. The country, however, began to weary of our constant embroilment in foreign quarrels, and of the restless war policy which actuated the Ministry, and which had been pursued to the complete detriment of domestic legislation. Mr. Gladstone's campaign in Midlothian in the autumn of 1879—during which he exhibited marvellous powers of eloquence and physical endurance—was greatly instru-

mental in turning the tide of popular feeling against the Government; and by the beginning of 1880 it was admitted on all hands that the dissolution could not be much longer delayed.

Mr. Bright attended the opening of the Birmingham Liberal Club on the 20th of January 1880, and in his speech made anticipatory allusions to the dissolution, which he also, in conjunction with the chief of the Liberal party, had for many months been looking forward to. The banquet in connection with the opening of the club was very brilliant and successful. It was held in the Town Hall, the Mayor, Mr. R. Chamberlain, presiding; and amongst those present were Mr. Bright (President of the Club), Sir William Harcourt, M.P., Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., Lord Lyttelton, the Earl of Camperdown, Sir J. Swinburne, and the following members of Parliament, in addition to those above named: Messrs. M. A. Bass, T. Lea, C. C. Cotes, H. Bass, R. Edge, T. R. Hill, C. Harrison, T. Blake, J. C. Clarke, and A. Brogden.

Sir W. Harcourt proposed the toast of the evening, 'The Health of the new Liberal Club of Birmingham.' In the course of his speech he attacked the Government with great wit and sarcasm, his numerous points being received with continuous laughter and applause. He justified the opposition of the Liberal party to the foreign policy of the Government, and contended that during the administrations both of Lord Palmerston and of Mr. Gladstone the Conservatives exercised the right to criticise and condemn the policy of their opponents. He (Sir William) did not complain of them for this; what he did complain of was 'the impudent fiction that they had never done that which was their constant practice.' He had been taken to task for daring to jest at such virtuous and excellent men as the members of Her Majesty's Government—a charge which all must admit came with crushing force from the followers and admirers of Lord Beaconsfield; but the humour of the situation was their creation, not his. Ministers did the most absurd thing in the world, and then expected that they would not laugh at them because they were Ministers.

Mr. Bright spoke at some length in response to the toast proposed by Sir W. Harcourt, his speech consisting chiefly of a review

of the political history of the last fifty years. In trenchant language he traced the course of the reforms which had been achieved; but as the substance of his inspiring recital has been given in preceding chapters of this work, we do not propose to repeat it here. This review led up to the question, What part in bringing about all the reforms of the last fifty years had the Conservative party played? Had they not offered a strenuous hostility to each boon wrung from power on behalf of justice and freedom? 'I recollect,' said Mr. Bright—and this portion of his speech was received with much laughter—'telling Mr. Disraeli in the House of Commons that when he required any illustrations from history in his speeches he made his history as he went along. He did not get it out of any books, or any authentic records, but from his own inner consciousness. It seems to me very much like what is done by an insect with which we are all familiar, that is very curious, but not very pleasant—I mean the spider. The spider, as you know, at least apparently—I do not know much about him—the spider spins from some sort of raw material inside, the yarn which he desires to make use of. With this yarn he weaves a very intricate and ingenious web, and with this web he catches flies. The Prime Minister has spun yarns, and he has woven webs, and caught a great many flies; and, so far as I find, the flies seem rather to like it; and in that fact we have at least an explanation of the sort of swollen eminence to which he has attained. Mr. Bright said he had nothing to remark of the Foreign Secretary (Lord Salisbury), except that there was a painful inexactitude in his recent statements; while as to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir S. Northcote), all were forced to admit that in the ingenuity of his financial explanations there was something much more to wonder at than to admire. The Conservatives reminded him (the speaker) of an anecdote of Dr. Johnson. The Doctor once said to a young man who was not to be commended, 'You must have taken immense pains with yourself; naturally, you could not possibly be as stupid as you are.' Mr. Bright thus concluded his speech:—

'Suppose that the present Prime Minister and his friends had been successful in preventing all the measures which they have strenuously opposed, what would have

been the state of the country now, what the rate of wages, what the condition of content and loyalty? You would have had long before this chaos over the country, and anarchy, or that kind of calm which ultimately succeeds when anarchy has passed away. You would have had your aristocracy dead, as they are politically dead in France; and more than that, I think it is highly probable that the English Crown, ancient and venerated as it is, if it had been subjected to the strain of fifty years more of Tory Government, would have at this moment been not worth more—if worth as much—as Mr. Turnerelli's wreath. (Loud laughter and applause.) And if the people of England allowed this Government, with an unchanged policy, or such a Government, to proceed twenty years longer, I would not give much for the institutions of this country, which the majority of the people value highly, but which we are sometimes told we do not think so much of as those to whom we are opposed. If this picture be true, is it not wise for young men, middle-aged men, all men, to connect themselves with the Liberal party in associations or clubs by which, by moral and just and honest means, the purposes of that party are intended to be promoted? Our duty, in my opinion, is to continue to work for these great objects. They are not all accomplished. There is much else to be done. Much has been done in fifty years. Those who from this platform, or from any other platform, can speak in fifty years to come, I hope that they may be able to show that they also have done their duty in their time—(cheers)—and that England, whether it boasts or not of being the centre of an empire on which the sun never sets, is an England with a population educated, well fed, civilised, and enlightened—such a population as we can only have under a just and a moral Government. I believe that at home we have much to do. Now our eyes are directed to foreign countries, to wars afar off, to the sufferings of our countrymen there, and to the more appalling sufferings they are inflicting on the populations with which we are at war. (Hear, hear.) Our eyes and our attention have been diverted from our own immediate and real interests. It is for you, members of this club—for members of the Liberal party throughout the kingdom—to make up their minds that, at the hour which is coming, there will be such a proclamation of opinion on the part of the universal constituencies that shall fix for ever the mark of their condemnation upon the policy of the last four or five years.' (Loud cheering.)

Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., in an able speech, subsequently proposed 'Success to the Liberal cause,' a toast which was responded to by the Earl of Camperdown.

Two days later Mr. Bright attended the annual *soirée* of the Junior Liberal Association of Birmingham, held in the Town Hall. Being called upon for a speech in the course of the evening, he said that he held it wise for young men to devote themselves, to a prudent extent, to the politics of their town and country. There were numbers of young men who brought discredit and suffering, and sometimes ruin, on their families because they had not taken up

any question to occupy their spare time. Coming to the question of the assimilation of the county and borough franchise, which he supposed would be one of the first proposals of a Liberal Government, Mr. Bright said that the main objection urged to this measure was the ignorance of those in a certain position in counties; but ignorance was not confined to the counties; and he believed that, if the spread of Liberal opinions or the conduct of great Liberal reforms which had been carried out had been left to men educated at universities, there could be very little to look back upon in our past that would meet either with our admiration or our satisfaction. Unfortunately the board schools could do very little in the way of really educating the rich.

The Zulu and Afghan wars Mr. Bright next proceeded to denounce as savage and cruel. 'I believe,' he said, 'all wars are savage and cruel; but I mean harsh and cruel wars on uncivilised or half-civilised men. When I read of transactions of that kind something always puts to me this question, What is it that makes, if anything makes, this needless and terrible slaughter different in its nature from those transactions which we call murder?' Excuses had been made for these wars—excuses which were not justified by the facts—excuses that the Zulus had attacked Natal, which was absolutely and notoriously and entirely false. With regard to the Afghans, statements had been made very much of the same character, that they were going to throw in their influence with another and a Northern Power, and that they insulted outrageously the Envoy sent to negotiate with them—all of which he believed there was not a particle of foundation for. At most, in regard to either of these peoples, the case was one of suspicion; but was it right, upon a mere suspicion, that a country like this should send, in the one case 20,000 and in the other 40,000 troops to invade territories, and to put to death not less, perhaps, than 20,000 men engaged in the defence of their own country, which in our case we considered honourable and needful? Mr. Bright then eulogised Bishop Colenso—whom he described as 'that eminent and, in his character and conduct, most Christian bishop'—for his conduct in regard to the Zulu war, and expressed his belief that the results of these wars

would in the end be disastrous to this country. The right hon. gentleman continued :—

‘You recollect, I dare say, many of you, a beautiful ode, written by one of our best poets, who puts into the mouth of an ancient British Queen, who is supposed to have lived nearly two thousand years ago, a complaint and a denunciation which she utters against the power of Rome, which at that time was invading her country and slaughtering her people. She is made to say, in the indignation with which her heart is filled—

“Rome shall perish—write that word—  
In the blood that she has spilt ;  
Perish, hopeless and abhorred,  
Deep in ruin and in guilt.”

It was not a prophecy of the British Queen. It was written perhaps a hundred years ago by an English poet, but it might well be that which the British Queen thought and in her words expressed. But what has happened ? The great empire has fallen ; it is a ruin everywhere. No completer ruin has history shown, perhaps, than the great ruin of the conquering and sanguinary Roman empire. Well, I believe—I believe it whether I read history sacred or profane—that the punishment which has fallen upon ancient empires, upon their rulers and their peoples, will visit modern times, with their rulers and their peoples, if they persist in the pursuit of empire and glory, sacrificing uncounted and countless multitudes of human lives. It seems to me that that which has taken place in past times must in this respect take place in times to come. The retribution—sometimes of individuals and sometimes of nations—comes slowly, but it is sure to come. A great Italian poet has said—

“The sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite,  
Nor yet doth linger.”

We may be quite sure, therefore, that in some shape, if we, the people of England, tolerate the bloody and sanguinary crimes which are committed in our name, if they are so committed, and we do not remonstrate and condemn, we shall have no acquittal at that tribunal by which the actions, not of individuals only, but of nations and peoples, are finally judged. Now that is my view. (Cheers.) Perhaps I have spoken strongly, and with a warmth and an earnestness which some of you might think unnecessary. (No.) I believe it is not possible to condemn too strongly the policy by which the hard-earned treasure of your people is wasted, and by which the blood of your brethren, and those whom you are told to call your foes, is spilt. To-day is the anniversary of what they call the battle or the massacre of Isandlana, when I know not how many, but I suppose at least 1500 men—officers, Englishmen, native troops, and I know not how many of the Zulus—were slaughtered. This is the anniversary of that sad day. Can any man show a justification for that transaction, or the compensation that we have received for the enormous and incalculable loss of that one day’s war ? (Hear, hear.) At this moment, in the Afghan country—in a country, I am told, as large as France and as mountainous as Switzerland—you hear of the hanging of scores of men, you hear of villages burnt, of women and

children turned out into the snow and the cold of this inclement season, and all done at the command of a Government and a people professing to be wiser, more intelligent, more humane, and more Christian than those upon whom these attacks are made. I say, let us abandon our pretensions; let us no longer claim to be Christian; let us go back to the heathen times, whilst we adhere to the heathen practices—(hear, hear); let us no longer—as I see some of the leading men of this country have been doing within the past few weeks, at the opening of churches and at the laying of the foundation-stones of churches—join in all the apparent regard for the Christian religion. 'Take down, at any rate, your Ten Commandments from inside your churches, and say no longer that you read, or believe in, or regard the Sermon on the Mount. Abandon your Christian pretensions, or else abandon your savage and heathen practices.' (Loud applause.)

Mr. Bright concluded by urging his hearers to join with others in the country in the endeavour to establish on firm foundations a Liberal, a wise, an intelligent, and a Christian Government.

On the 30th of January Lord Derby and Mr. Bright were present at a dinner given by the Mayor of Manchester to the judges of the assize—the Lord Chief-Justice, Lord Coleridge, and Lord Justice Brett. Responding to the toast of the House of Commons, Mr. Bright said that in 1832 and 1867 the House underwent with advantage severe treatment, and he was not sure that the patient just now was not subject to a recurrence of its malady. The House was now partly paralysed. Whatever was done to change its politics was done by the borough representatives; and the time was coming when people would get tired of the paralysis, and would want to give to both portions of it, county and borough, united action.

The announcement of the dissolution of Parliament was made in both Houses on the 8th of March. On the following day the newspapers contained a manifesto by the Prime Minister, in the shape of a letter addressed to the Duke of Marlborough, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Touching first upon the measures taken for the relief of the impending distress in Ireland, Lord Beaconsfield went on to observe that a portion of its population was attempting to sever the constitutional tie which united it to Great Britain. 'It is to be hoped,' he said, 'that all men of light and leading will resist this destructive doctrine.' But there were some who challenged the expediency of the Imperial character of this realm.

‘Having attempted, and failed, to enfeeble our colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognise in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish but precipitate their purpose.’ The manifesto went on to say that the occasion was very critical; but the power of England and the peace of Europe would largely depend upon the verdict of the country; that Her Majesty’s present Ministers. had hitherto been able to secure peace, but that this blessing could not be obtained by the principle of non-interference;—peace rested on the presence, not to say the ascendancy, of England in the councils of Europe. Questioned in the House of Lords as to the meaning of this ascendancy, the Premier said he meant nothing more than moral ascendancy; he did not mean supremacy.

The Liberal leaders at once issued their counter-manifestoes. Lord Hartington replied with force and dignity to the Premier’s letter. ‘The influence of England,’ he remarked in his address to the electors of North-East Lancashire, ‘does not rest upon boasts of ascendancy over Europe irrespective of the objects for which that ascendancy is to be employed. It rests on the firmness and moderation of our conduct, based upon the material and moral strength of our position, and exercised in concert with other nations on behalf of peace, justice, and freedom.’ Mr. Gladstone, in his address to the electors of Mid-Lothian, also replied to the Prime Minister’s ‘dark allusions,’ pointing out that the true purpose of these terrifying insinuations was to hide from view the acts of the Ministry, and their effect upon the character and condition of the country.

The people were now speedily thrown into the excitement and turmoil of a general election. The energy and activity of the leaders on both sides was very noteworthy; for during the elections Mr. Gladstone made no fewer than fifteen speeches, Lord Hartington twenty-four, Mr. Bright, Sir Stafford Northcote, and Sir. W. Harcourt six each, and Col. Stanley nine. The three members for Birmingham issued a brief joint address, and Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Muntz were early in the field, addressing meetings of the electors. The old representatives were opposed



in the Conservative interest by the Hon. A. C. G. Calthorpe and Major Burnaby. The last named did the speaking, which was frequently of a very injudicious, and occasionally of a very vulgar, kind.

Mr. Bright arrived in Birmingham on the 19th, and the scene at New Street, where a large crowd awaited the arrival of the right hon. gentleman, was very animated when the train steamed into the station and Mr. Bright was perceived. In Stephenson Place also, and in New Street, large crowds had assembled, who cheered lustily as Mr. Bright drove off with Mr. Chamberlain. In the evening there was a great Liberal meeting in the Town Hall, which in a few minutes from the time of opening was crowded from floor to ceiling. Mr. Jaffray took the chair. When Mr. Bright rose to speak he was received (said the *Birmingham Daily Post*) with one of those outbursts of enthusiasm which are never witnessed in Birmingham except at meetings where Mr. Bright is present. Every person in the hall seemed to cheer lustily, and the gratifying demonstration continued for several minutes. Alluding first to the dissolution, Mr. Bright said he was prepared to admit that it was not unacceptable to him, and he felt quite sure that it had brought an extraordinary sense of relief to the whole country. We were now witnessing the dying hours of the worst of modern Parliaments, and beholding the spectacle of the worst of Administrations being brought up for judgment. Addressing himself mainly to the working classes, he drew a vivid picture of how, during the past fifty years, they had grown to be a great power in the State, and were now able to regard themselves as free men, in the enjoyment of full political power. He pointed out that they owed the inestimable blessings which they were now privileged to enjoy to the foresight, judgment, and indefatigable labours of the Liberal party; and he referred to several measures—notably those which secured the advantages of a free press and compulsory education—as an example of the great work in which Mr. Gladstone and his followers had successfully engaged. The Conservatives, he showed, had systematically opposed all efforts at reform, and had obstructed instead of advancing the attainment of results at which good

legislation had aimed during the past half-century. This being the case, he asked whether the electors were prepared to give the Conservative party a new lease of life. This question elicited a storm of opposition cries.

Mr. Bright next dealt with the policy of the existing Administration, which he denounced as one of restriction, monopoly, selfishness, and injustice. Since 1874 the country had had no liberal measures. They had had extravagance such as had been unknown for many years, they had had increasing debt and increasing taxes; and if they had not yet paid for all that had been done, the cost of this retrograde policy would have to be borne by some one at a future day. Instead of doing something that was calculated to promote the interests of the people at home, the Government had been marauding over half the world. England, the mother of free nations, and herself the origin of free Parliaments, had, at the instigation of Lord Beaconsfield, been supporting oppression in Turkey, and carrying fire and sword to the farthest extremities of the earth. He asked them whether they would still trust power to these men in the future, or whether they would not give it to men who would be generous at home, and just and moral and, so far as it was in their power, peaceful abroad. Mr. Bright said he would not further criticise that wonderful production, the Prime Minister's manifesto, than by saying that it was not likely to add to the number of Conservative representatives from Ireland; and in closing he said he believed there was a voice sounding and a feeling stirring throughout the people of the United Kingdom that would hurl from power the men who had abused it, and that would place in their seats, and in the counsels of the Crown, men whose policy was dictated by a love for the nation,—not a love for gunpowder and glory, but a love for the true and lasting interests of the great people who might entrust them with the authority of government.

A vote of confidence, on the motion of Mr. R. W. Dale, was carried in the three members.

The vote of those who were engaged in the liquor trade throughout the country was, of course, much discussed at the general election. This interest was a very important element in every

borough, and in numerous instances the publicans, alarmed by the proposal in favour of local option, threw in their lot with the Conservatives. A deputation, representing the licensed victuallers of Birmingham, waited upon Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain on the 20th, when a lengthy conversation ensued upon the objects of the deputation. Mr. Bright expressed himself in favour of transferring the licensing authority to Town Councils, and warned the licensed victuallers against throwing themselves into the hands of one political party, and thus creating a widespread feeling of hostility in another political party, which, after all, was the strongest, and which might come into office again before two months had expired. Speaking of the attitude of the Liberal party on this question, Mr. Bright said: 'I do not suppose that it will deal with any severity in any way with you; whenever it does deal with the liquor question—if it ever does deal with it—you may depend upon it, it is the last party in the country that will ever do anything that will be in a pecuniary sense unjust to your interests. What it deprives you of in the public interest, it will at any rate compensate you for, and endeavour to do justice, as it does to the whole country and to every interest. You may depend upon it, it will not be unjust to the licensed victuallers and those who are concerned in the sale of those things which, unfortunately, here it appears necessary in some degree to control. I hope as years go on, and you consider this question more, and it is more and more discussed, you will find out that the violent, and I think irrational and passionate, action which you now take is not wise for sensible men, and that it is not of any advantage whatever to the interests you are trying to defend. In the House of Commons, as one of your representatives—if I am again a representative for Birmingham—I shall take care that whatever is done for the public interests shall not be done at the expense of injustice to your trade.' Mr. Bright added that he did not expect to alter their opinions one bit, and being assured by a member of the deputation that their very existence was at stake, he remarked that they were 'more frightened than hurt.' Mr. Chamberlain said that, speaking generally, he quite concurred in what had fallen from his colleague.

Meetings now followed each other in rapid succession. On the 23rd Mr. Bright spoke twice. The meetings took place in the evening, and Mr. Bright was accompanied on his route by bands of music and about 250 torch-bearers. The scene was most interesting and picturesque. As the torchlight procession marched through the streets the band struck up alternately 'Johnnie comes marching home again,' and 'See, the conquering hero comes.' At the first meeting Mr. Bright spoke of the necessity for a reform of the county franchise as the one thing indispensable to a carrying out of various reforms, such as an improvement of the game and land laws; and he advised the working men of the towns, who themselves possessed the franchise, to vote for no candidate who was not willing to confer the same privilege on householders in the counties. At the second meeting the right hon. gentleman said, alluding to his opponents, that he should have thought the Conservatives might have found some persons as well acquainted with political affairs as Conservatives usually are. He then severely criticised the policy of the Government; and with regard to the Treaty of Berlin, by which 'Peace with Honour' had been secured, he observed that it was the people of England who kept out of war with Russia, and not the gentlemen who went to Berlin with a secret arrangement in their pocket which they had previously made with Russia. He did ask, whatsoever form of Government they might have, for men who would be honest and truthful.

On the 24th Mr. Bright made a speech at Cave's Auction Mart, the chief topic dealt with being the pressing necessity for a reform in the land laws. Mr. Cobden used to say that whoever freed the land would render as great a service to his country as the Anti-Corn-Law League had done by freeing the produce of the land. The necessities of the population would enforce this, and the growing competition from abroad would make it impossible to evade it before long. Referring to certain slanders which had been uttered against him by his opponents, and their falsification of some of his Irish addresses, Mr. Bright showed their groundlessness, and added that John Martin, the strong Nationalist, once came up to him at the door of the House of Commons and said, 'I have watched your public

conduct, and I have seen that you have never said one single word that was offensive, or unkind, or unjust to my country; and I wish to shake you by the hand and to tell you so.'

The three Liberal candidates made a last appeal to the electors on the 29th, the nomination being fixed for the following day. In order to ensure the return of their three candidates—each elector having only two votes—the leaders of the Liberal party in the borough divided the support of the Liberal electors in the various wards, directing electors in each ward only to vote for two candidates, and naming the two candidates to whom their votes must be given. This plan was known as the 'Vote-as-you-are-told scheme.' The five candidates were duly nominated, and the poll ordered to be taken on the 31st, at 139 polling stations.

The Conservatives professed to be very sanguine of success, asserting up to the very last that victory was within their grasp; but the result showed a great Liberal victory. The arrangement for the equalisation of votes in different wards succeeded admirably, all three of the Liberal candidates being brought in triumphantly at but a short distance from each other. After the counting of the votes, the Mayor announced the result to be as follows: For Mr. Muntz, 22,969; Mr. Bright, 22,079; Mr. Chamberlain, 19,544; Major Burnaby, 15,735; and the Hon. A. C. G. Calthorpe, 14,308. The majority of the lowest Liberal over the highest Conservative was consequently 3809. It may be added here that two other Liberal members for the ensuing Parliament were furnished by Birmingham on the following day, Mr. J. S. Wright being elected for Nottingham, and Mr. Jesse Collings for Ipswich. After the poll at Birmingham the three successful candidates issued a brief joint address, thanking the electors. 'We congratulate you,' said this document, 'on the result of your great contest, and on your great victory. Birmingham is still Birmingham, true to its old faith, and to its love of freedom.'

The elections generally throughout the country resulted in the complete discomfiture of the Conservative party. On the first day of the polling, March 31st, the Liberals gained no fewer than twenty-four seats in the boroughs, and only lost nine. Three days

later the gains had sprung up to fifty. The counties, however, were still to be fought, and both sides eagerly awaited the verdict of the rural constituencies. But here also great Liberal triumphs were registered. Ultimately, when all the returns from the constituencies had been completed, it was found that the new Parliament would consist of 349 Liberals, 243 Conservatives, and 60 Home Rulers. The Liberals were indeed signally avenged for the disaster of 1874.

Much speculation took place as to who would be the new Liberal Premier. On the resignation of Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Hartington was sent for; but on the following day, the 23rd of April, when his lordship and Earl Granville had an audience of the Queen together, Mr. Gladstone was sent for. The veteran Liberal chief undertook to form a Ministry, and in that Ministry he assumed the double office of Premier and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Bright again accepted office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and the remaining members of the Cabinet were the following: Lord Chancellor, Lord Selborne; Lord President of the Council, Earl Spencer; Lord Privy Seal, Duke of Argyll; Foreign Secretary, Earl Granville; Secretary for India, the Marquis of Hartington; Home Secretary, Sir W. Vernon Harcourt; Colonial Secretary, Earl of Kimberley; War Secretary, Mr. Childers; First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Northbrook; Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Forster; President of the Local Government Board, Mr. Dodson; and President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Chamberlain. The Duke of Argyll afterwards seceded from the Ministry on the question of the Irish Land Bill.

Upon accepting office Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain issued their addresses to the electors of Birmingham, seeking re-election. Mr. Bright wrote: 'I have accepted office in the Administration which has just been formed, and the seat in Parliament which you conferred upon me a month ago is now vacant. I need not tell you how greatly I value your good opinion, and how much I hope that in again becoming a member of the Government I have in no degree forfeited it. In one of my speeches during the week before the last election I told you that in the month of April we should

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have a new Parliament, in the month of May a new Government, and that by the month of June it would be seen that the nation had accepted and adopted a new policy. I hope and believe the change we have witnessed will tend to the honour of the Crown and to the welfare of the people. Whether in office or out of it, I shall endeavour to serve you faithfully.'

The two Ministers were re-elected for Birmingham on the 7th of May, without opposition.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

*PUBLIC QUESTIONS—1880-81.*

Mr. Bright on the Pacification of Ireland.—Speech at Birmingham.—Scheme for the Reform of the Irish Land Laws.—Mr. Bright on the Rise of Nonconformity.—The Session of 1880.—Mr. Bradlaugh and the Oath.—Mr. Gladstone proposes the appointment of a Select Committee.—Appeal by Mr. Bright.—A Committee appointed.—Its Decision.—Further Debates in the House.—Eloquent Speech by Mr. Bright.—Arrest and Release of Mr. Bradlaugh.—Further History of this Legislative Difficulty.—Mr. Bright on Capital Punishment.—On the Representation of Minorities.—He is elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Address on Irish Affairs.—The House of Lords and the Compensation for Disturbance Bill.—Necessity for a good Land Reform.—Correspondence with Lord Carnarvon.—Mr. Bright on International Arbitration.—Address from French Liberals on the Transvaal War.—Free Trade and Reciprocity.—Letters from Mr. Bright.—Local Option in the House of Commons.—Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Resolution carried.—Irish Questions in the Session of 1881.—The Coercion Bill.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—The Land League Agitation.—Mr. Gladstone introduces the Land Bill.—Mr. Bright at the Fishmongers' Banquet.—Observations on the Land Bill.—Debate on the Condition of the Agricultural Labourers in Ireland.—Mr. Bright's Views on the Question.—Second Reading of the Land Bill.—Mr. Bright's Speech.—Ministers at the Mansion House.—The Land Bill passes the Lords and becomes Law.



NE of the greatest objects to which Mr. Bright has devoted himself during his long political career has been, as we have had abundant occasion for seeing, the pacification of Ireland. Early in 1880 he once more exhibited his earnestness on this question.

On the 24th of January the members for Birmingham met their constituents in the Town Hall, and on the motion of Mr. J. S. Wright, seconded by Mr. Alderman Collings, a vote of renewed confidence was passed in them.

Mr. Bright's speech in reply was almost entirely devoted to the



Irish question. After remarking upon what England had been doing abroad, while she had neglected her own people near home, he said that fourteen years ago, when speaking in Dublin, he had quoted a question put in the Parliament of Kilkenny, 'How comes it to pass that the King is never the richer for Ireland?' The question originally put five hundred years ago, and repeated fourteen years ago, still pressed for an answer. This he found in the condition of the land question in Ireland, a condition differing from anything in any other country in the world. It was true that the laws in Ireland with regard to the land were as nearly as possible the same as in England. But evil laws might work much more mischief in one country and under one state of things than the same laws would in another country with another state of things. Great industries had grown up in England to correct the evil of the feudal system of land; and in these industries the people, divorced from the land by reason of the feudal laws, had found a fresh resource. In Ireland there were something over twenty millions of acres of land, and 292 persons owned nearly one-third. The whole of the proprietors in Ireland were ten or twelve thousand in number, while the tenant farmers were 600,000. There were therefore nearly three millions of people who were mostly tenants at will, liable to have their rents raised and to be ejected at the will of the landlord. Of these landlords a very large proportion were absentees, who spent their rents in London or Paris, or elsewhere out of Ireland.

Mr. Bright asked whether there was any remedy for the state of things which existed in Ireland. Two had been offered from Ireland: one proposed fixity of tenure, with terms to be settled by a third party acting between landlord and tenant; while by the other fixity of tenure was secured by means of a permanently settled rent which the landlord was to receive, and there his connection with the land was to end, the tenant remaining for ever, or as long as this rent was paid, in the position of absolute owner. These schemes he dismissed as being inconsistent with sound principles. He himself was against sudden and heroic remedies. But, the right hon. gentleman continued, two things he would do:—

'First of all, I would absolutely stop, by withdrawing all encouragement, the formation of great estates. I would say that when a man owning land died without a will his land should be subject to exactly the same rule of division which is now applied to personal property. Well, then I would put an end to the system of entail, by which it would be rendered impossible to tie up land, through the man who lies quietly in the churchyard not having had the power of determining for long after he was dead the ownership of the estate which he himself had possessed. I would so legislate that every present generation should be the absolute owners of the land, and the next generation should be the absolute owners; but neither this nor the next should be able to dictate to future generations who should own it. I would have the compulsory registration of all landed property, so that it would be easy, at the expense of only a few shillings or pounds, to transfer a farm or an estate from one to another by an absolutely legal and definite sale. These are things that are done elsewhere, and they ought to be done here just as easily if you would only lay hold of the landed proprietor and lay hold of the lawyer. They tell me that this is a very difficult thing to do; but it has been done elsewhere, and it must be done here. Nay, more, if you and others like you will speak out it shall be done here.'

Mr. Bright's second proposal he described as a mode by which the occupying tenantry, in thousands and thousands of cases, might in a very short time be made, not occupying tenants, but occupying landowners—positive owners of their farms. He admitted that the purchase clauses of Mr. Gladstone's Land Act of 1870 had been, with few exceptions, a failure; and gave the reasons for this. After passing an eulogium upon the labours of Mr. Shaw-Lefevre as a member of the Committee appointed by the House of Commons, of which Mr. Bright himself was one, the right hon. gentleman said that that Committee found it was necessary to change the Act of 1870—to establish instead of the Landed Estates Court a separate, independent, and powerful Commission for the purpose of doing this great work amongst the tenantry of Ireland. The proposition was, that if any man wished to buy a farm which his landlord or anybody else was disposed to sell, the Treasury would find a certain portion of the money—it might be two-thirds or three-fourths. The transaction being completed, the farmer goes on paying his rent to the Commission, which is the interest on the money that he has borrowed from them; and after thirty-five years he has paid all the interest and all the principal of the advance made by the Treasury, and the farm becomes his own so long as he chooses to keep it. 'Now, I want the Government—the Parliament—to pass a law

which shall compel the London Companies, for example, who are the owners of great estates in the county of Londonderry, to sell their estates under an Act of this kind. I want, also, that the Commission to be appointed should have the power of taking over absolutely any estate offered them for sale which they might think a desirable estate, so that, having it in possession, as the Church Commission had their lands in possession, they might hand it over to various tenants who were willing to buy it. I don't want a Commission to go there and sit down with good salaries to do nothing. They should have a suitable staff; they should have a good lawyer on it, and men thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the land and the people in Ireland; and they should advertise and let all the Irish tenantry know that the Imperial Government has sent them to Dublin, not for the purpose of opening an office and giving salaries—establishing a new system of patronage—but that they should go there and hold out a helping hand to every honest, industrious tenant in Ireland who wishes to possess his farm; and that wherever his landlord was willing to help he would find them willing to give him a transfer.'

Mr. Bright said he believed if his plan were carried out they would find many of the Irish proprietors now living in England would regard it as a great good to their country. Many of these noblemen and gentlemen had no interest whatever but in the prosperous condition of Ireland, and they would be willing to aid in the transfer of estates to the tenantry, and to accept the fair and just compensation which the Government would offer to them. The right hon. gentleman thus concluded his address:—

'At present what the Irishman wants upon his farm more than all else is to get rid of suspicion; to get rid of the fear of injury, of uncertainty as to his tenure; to have infused into his mind the opposite feelings of confidence and of hope. (Cheers.) If you would give to all Irish tenants that confidence and hope, every year would see them advancing in a better cultivation and a more prosperous condition. Does anybody say that hope is nothing and of no avail in the affairs of men? I might quote from the poet who has—what shall I say?—created almost an immortality for our language. He speaks of hope. He says—

"White-handed Hope,  
Thou hovering angel girl with golden wings."

(Loud cheers.) Bring this hope into the Irish farmer's family, and into his household, and it will have an influence as complete, as blessed, and as home-ruling as it will have in the mansions of the rich or the palaces of the great. (Cheers.) So far as I have seen Irishmen in their own country and in this, they are as open to good and kind treatment as any other people. They have been the victims of untoward circumstances, which all your histories describe. We—our forefathers—have subjugated them and maltreated them. We suffer in reputation, they suffer in their lives, through the misdoings of the past. Let us now not be weary of the attempt to bring about a reformation in that country, which I believe would quell the suspicion, and quell the discontent, and banish the disloyalty which we all lament in Ireland. As to the present distress, I hope that the duty of the Government will not be neglected. I hope they have not spent so much in endeavouring to civilise Zulus and Afghans that they are not able to do something for their poor people nearer home. (Hear, hear.) I hope, Sir, the Government, in dealing with the Irish question, will deal with it frankly, and openly, and generously; and that they, as they are now under the pressure of the present distress, will open their hands to relieve the suffering people of the West,—that they will open their hearts, and their intellects too, to the further and the greater question of what shall be done for Ireland in the future.' (Applause.)

In the course of a brief second speech Mr. Bright further remarked on the Irish question: 'We are coming, I presume, by all the indications and by the fact of a constitutional rule, which certain people cannot escape from—we are coming to the time of a General Election. If Toryism were a good thing Ireland would be in a prosperous condition; for there has not been a country in Europe, there has not been a population of this kingdom which has been for so long a period under the principles which Toryism is supposed to love, as Ireland itself. It has had plenty of military control, it has had plenty of feudalism with regard to its land, it has had a Church which it did not like and which insulted it, and it has had generally a treatment on the part of the Imperial Parliament in past times which might cause it to submit, but never can make it content. I hope the Liberal party will so conduct itself with regard to that country that, whatever there is of a true patriotism and a true honour among its leading men—I mean its men who are now politically leading—that it may be possible for the two to act together on behalf of measures which are necessary, and can no longer be postponed, if we have any real interest in the well-being of that portion of the United Kingdom.'

Mr. Bright's scheme was, of course, variously viewed by the press, but even those journals which dissented from his proposals admitted that a revolution in Irish agriculture was inevitable.

We turn from Ireland to a less debatable subject. . On the 10th of February 1880 Mr. Bright presided at the first of a series of lectures delivered in Union Chapel, Islington, by Mr. R. W. Dale, on 'The Rise of Evangelical Nonconformity.' After referring to the great compliment which the Rev. Dr. Allon had paid him in asking him to preside, Mr. Bright said that he took a strong interest in the subject of the lecture, because he had sprung from the stock of the martyrs of two centuries ago. He then gave a brief historical retrospect of the past history of Nonconformity, and said that for a long period the Nonconformists of England had been the great advancing and reforming force in our English political life. At the same time they must not forget, and they ought to acknowledge with thankfulness, that there were large numbers of those who were not Nonconformists who had constantly and honestly co-operated with Nonconformists in all that they had done in favour of greater civil and religious freedom. But for all that they must admit with sorrow that even now the people of this country were set apart in two great divisions. Referring to the bishops, Mr. Bright said he could not for one moment doubt that there were many excellent men among them who grieved in their souls at the evil policy which was adopted at times by the Government; yet, so far as he had observed within the last two years, when throughout the whole realm of Nonconformity there had been a united protest against certain transactions, not one bishop had opened his mouth in the House of Lords to condemn one single act that had been committed. This showed to him, not that those men were not good men, but that they were in an unfortunate position for defending what was good. Mr. Bright then eloquently referred to the work achieved by the Nonconformists :—

‘What has Nonconformity done in England? Look at the churches and chapels it has reared over the whole country; look at the schools it has built; look at the ministers it has supported; look at the Christian work which it has conducted. And we must not forget that this great Nonconformist body does not include the great

wealth of the country. Nearly all the land in the United Kingdom, within some very moderate percentage, is in the hands of Churchmen and Conformists. They have also, or had till lately, nearly all the endowments of a religious character. They have now the possession of some millions a year of ancient tithes. But without any of these the Nonconformists have done their great work in this kingdom. (Hear, hear.) And no Churchman will deny—I don't care how much he may be political—that the Nonconformist population is at least as obedient to the law as any other portion of the people of these kingdoms. If you observe their industry, if you observe their domestic virtues, if you observe their condition as regards morals and religion, I undertake to say, here and everywhere, that they will at least bear comparison in those qualities with Churchmen of every state and rank. If I were a Churchman myself—and I suppose it is very much a matter of accident that I am not—(laughter)—if they had not imprisoned an ancestor of mine for many years in Derby Jail, for anything I know I might have been a Churchman now—I hope I should at least have had that sense of honour and of justice which would have enabled me to look round and behold all the great works of the great Nonconformist body in England, and to regard them with admiration and honour. (Cheers.) I would ask you—perhaps I need not ask you, but I would ask any who may read anything that I say on this subject, to look round and consider how much of what there is free and good and great, and constantly growing in what is good in this country, which is owing to Nonconformist action, self-denial, and effort; and, looking upon that, if he cannot himself be a Nonconformist, let him not despise the Nonconformists, but let him say it is a great country and a noble race that can enable a portion of its population to do all this in the unfavourable circumstances in which they have been placed.' (Loud applause.)

On the meeting of the new Parliament at the close of April 1880 an embarrassing question arose with regard to the Parliamentary oath in the case of Mr. Bradlaugh. This gentleman had been elected for Northampton, and on the third day of the swearing-in of members he appeared with a written claim to be allowed to make an affirmation of allegiance instead of taking the oath. There were many who said that the Speaker should have allowed Mr. Bradlaugh to affirm at his own risk, leaving him to be sued in a court of law for the statutory penalties for sitting in the House without the statutory qualification; but the case was so novel that the Speaker declined to interfere, and left it to the House to determine the claim. The House was speedily plunged into a series of exciting discussions, in which the religious element lent fuel to the flame; and as a natural consequence legislation was much retarded. On the motion of Lord F. Cavendish, who represented the Government, the chief Ministers not being in the house owing to the new elections conse-

quent on their taking office, a Select Committee was appointed to consider whether Mr. Bradlaugh had a right under the statutes upon which he founded his claim to make an affirmation. This Committee decided against him by a majority of one; but without waiting to see whether the House endorsed the finding of the Committee, Mr. Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House on the 21st of May for the purpose now of taking the oath. Sir H. Drummond Wolff objected to this, on the ground that an atheist was not entitled to take an oath. He asked whether the House would allow that formality to be gone through which the hon. member himself avowed would be a mere formality and nothing more. He moved that Mr. Bradlaugh be not allowed to take the oath, and this was seconded by Mr. Alderman Fowler.

Mr. Gladstone proposed the appointment of a Select Committee to consider and report upon this difficult and delicate question. Was the House, he asked, competent to interfere and prevent him from fulfilling a duty imposed by statute? That was really the question to decide. Of course, if he took the oath, he might be open to prosecution; but could the House prevent him from taking the oath if he were willing to do so? After several other members had spoken, Mr. Bright made an eloquent appeal to the House to discuss the question simply as a question of right and of law, and not with reference to religious views. Was the House, he inquired, by a multitudinous vote to decide that there was no question of law involved, and that it would have no legal opinion, no reference to a Committee of judicious and eminent members, on the point? And after refusing to allow Mr. Bradlaugh to take the oath, what did they propose to do? Would they declare his seat vacant? The electors of Northampton were cognisant of Mr. Bradlaugh's views when they chose him as their representative, and they would probably elect him again. Mr. Bright referred to the case of John Wilkes as an instance of the inconvenience and trouble of a contest between the House of Commons and a particular constituency; and in conclusion he said: 'Would it not be better to follow the wise and statesman-like advice of the First Minister of the Crown—whose devotion to the Christian faith and desire to support the dignity of the Crown are

as great as that of any hon. gentleman opposite,—which will give an opportunity for calm deliberation, instead of at once taking a course which would, if adopted, have the effect of shutting the door of the House of Commons irrevocably against the member for Northampton ?’

The debate was adjourned, but in the end Sir H. D. Wolff’s resolution was negatived by 289 to 214. The Committee, with somewhat different powers from those originally suggested by Mr. Gladstone, was appointed after many discussions, and began its sittings. Mr. Bradlaugh conducted his own case. At the close of the sittings the Committee decided by a large majority that Mr. Bradlaugh could not be allowed to take the oath, but appended a recommendation that he should be allowed to make an affirmation at his own risk, subject to the penalties recoverable for taking his seat without the statutory declaration. On the 21st of June the question entered upon a new stage. Mr. Labouchere proposed that Mr. Bradlaugh be allowed to make an affirmation or declaration, and Sir H. Giffard moved as an amendment that he be not allowed to do so. The battle now waged as furiously as ever. During the discussion Mr. Gladstone warned the House of the impropriety and danger of entering into a conflict with the constituency which had returned Mr. Bradlaugh. Mr. Bright raised the tone of the debate, and made another eloquent appeal on behalf of toleration. One phrase in his speech greatly excited the wrath of the Opposition. He affirmed his belief and regret that ‘to a large extent the working people of the country do not care any more for the dogmas of Christianity than the upper classes care for the practice of that religion.’ Mr. Bright laid great stress on the fact that Mr. Bradlaugh had never refused to take the oath, that he had merely expressed a preference for affirming, and that he had always declared the oath to be binding on his honour and conscience. As to the first report, without desiring to disparage its authority, it left the matter in great doubt; and with regard to the second, he thought Mr. Bradlaugh had not been fairly treated in being refused the oath because he had asked for the affirmation. There was no precedent for this inquisition into a man’s religious views when he came to the



table to be sworn. This interference, he contended, would set up a new test of Theism, and would divide members into two classes. After blaming the Conservative party for resisting, as usual, the claims of justice and generosity, he warned them that all the constituencies of the kingdom would make Mr. Bradlaugh's case their own, and that the course proposed would lead to much evil, and involve the House in humiliation. 'I am here,' said Mr. Bright, 'as the defender of what I believe to be the principles of our constitution, of the freedom of constituencies to elect, and of the freedom of the elected to sit in Parliament. That freedom, which has been so hardly won, I do not believe the House of Commons will endeavour to wrest from our constituencies, knowing by what slow steps we have reached the point we have now attained; and I do not believe that on the recommendation of the hon. member for Portsmouth they will turn back and deny the principles which have been so dear to them.'

Notwithstanding the appeals made by Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright, however, Sir H. Giffard's amendment was carried by 275 to 230—about thirty Liberals voting in favour of it, and a still larger number abstaining from voting altogether. On the following day Mr. Bradlaugh, who appeared at the bar, and in an able speech claimed his right to take the oath, was taken into custody by the Serjeant-at-Arms for refusing to obey the Speaker's order to withdraw. Considerable excitement ensued, but Mr. Bradlaugh was speedily released by an order of the House, carried on the motion of Sir S. Northcote. On the 1st of July the House passed another resolution, to the effect that every person claiming to be a person permitted by law to make an affirmation instead of taking the oath should be allowed to do so, subject to any liability by statute. This temporarily removed the difficulty between the constituency and the House.

Actions at law were commenced against Mr. Bradlaugh, however, to recover penalties from him for having voted in the House without being entitled to do so. On the main question the case was decided against him, but an appeal was raised on a technical point, which went against the member for Northampton. Meanwhile, in the session of 1881, further difficulties arose in connection with the case, in consequence of the appearance of Mr. Bradlaugh at the

House, demanding admittance. Orders were given forbidding him to enter the House, and on his attempting to do so he was forcibly removed. A great number of sympathisers with Mr. Bradlaugh were present in Palace Yard during this scene, and it formed the subject of a debate in the House of Commons. Mr. Bright said he had heard a description of the scene with great pain, and he spoke with feeling of the severity which had been exercised towards Mr. Bradlaugh. He hoped some means would be adopted to meet the case, and to preserve the dignity of the House of Commons, which appeared to him to be in danger. The pressure of public business prevented the Government from bringing in a bill to meet the necessities of the case, and this extraordinary legislative difficulty remained still unsettled at the close of the session of 1881.

On the 2nd of June 1880 Mr. Bright presided at the annual public debate of the University College Debating Society. The proposition discussed was, 'That Capital Punishment should be abolished.' In summing up at the close of the debate he spoke strongly against the penalty of death, and expressed his firm conviction that the time would come when the barbarous system of capital punishment would be abolished in this country. The meeting decided in favour of the abolition, which was one of the earliest measures ever advocated by Mr. Bright, and one of the few great social reforms which he has not as yet lived to see carried out.

Mr. Bright's hostility to the principle of the representation of minorities has always been very pronounced, and the most recent evidence of this was furnished in a letter which he wrote in 1879, to be read at a meeting held to celebrate the formation of a Liberal club at Platt Bridge, near Wigan, on the 20th of July. 'In our division of the county,' said Mr. Bright, 'a great change has been made. There is now, I believe, only one Tory member returned from the constituency of the South-East division, and he is in the humiliating condition of being the minority member. He sits by virtue, not of the goodwill or vote of the majority of the electors of Manchester, but by a contrivance invented to cripple the Parliamentary influence of the great populations and constituencies. His sitting in Parliament is by a direct violation of the ancient principle

of the constitution, which in all past times gave to majorities the right to select and to elect members of the House of Commons. Much may be done by labour bestowed on registration, and you have a good field before you. I hope you will be able by the time another general election occurs to place your division in a position as advantageous and as creditable as that now occupied by the South-East division, and by the boroughs within its limits.'

On the 15th of November 1880 Mr. Bright was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University, in succession to Mr. Gladstone. The Conservative and Independent students nominated Mr. Ruskin, but the author of 'The Stones of Venice' only received 814 votes as against 1128 for Mr. Bright. The right hon. gentleman had a majority in all four nations. A torchlight procession by the Liberal students took place at night through the principal streets of Glasgow in honour of Mr. Bright's victory. It was understood that the new Lord Rector was to be at perfect liberty to deliver his Rectorial address at any time he pleased during his period of office, which expired in November 1883.

A great Liberal meeting was held at Birmingham on the 16th of November 1880, and Mr. Bright, who delivered a lengthy speech, again devoted himself to a consideration of the Irish question. Mr. Chamberlain occupied the chair at this meeting, and in his opening speech made a spirited defence of the Eastern policy of the Government. On the subject of Ireland, he remarked that the state of affairs in that country was exaggerated by panic; but at the same time it was certain that acts were taking place there which all men must deprecate, and he was no true friend of Ireland who would not join in entreating the Irish people at this crisis to exhibit their horror and detestation of outrages which would bring discredit upon any cause, and which were likely to ruin, if they were persisted in, the cause which the more patriotic of the Irish people had at heart.

Mr. Bright at once grappled with the great question of the day. Ireland, he observed, was suffering from evils which our forefathers, if they had understood the questions they dealt with, would never have inflicted on the people. If the English Government had

always been merciful and just to Ireland, there could not be a doubt that Ireland would be as closely welded to England at that moment as Scotland was; and it would be as difficult to raise the flag of insurrection or discontent in Ireland as it would be for Prince Charlie again to appear with his flag in Scotland. The present movement in a portion of Ireland was a social revolt of a very strange and remarkable character. It was not, apparently, so much a rising against the Government as against the owners of the soil. There was practically a seizing of the land from which they believed their fathers had been driven out. Such a condition of things demanded the earnest attention and consideration, not only of statesmen and legislators, but of the whole people of the country who were allied with them; 'for we have all a great interest in the welfare of Ireland; and the man who insults Ireland, or injures it, who tramples upon it, who denies it its just rights, is an enemy of England as much as an enemy of Ireland.'

After referring to what had been done in the way of legislation for Ireland since 1869, Mr. Bright complained strongly of the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill in the previous session by the House of Lords. The right hon. gentleman continued :—

'I recollect some years ago making an observation, I believe on this very platform, about the House of Lords. I said in my opinion an hereditary House of Legislature could not be a permanent institution in a free country. (Loud cheers.) Some time after that, when Lord Palmerston was forming a Government, he was urged by Lord John Russell to offer offices in his Cabinet to Mr. Cobden and myself. You recollect that Mr. Cobden was then in America, and the office which Mr. Chamberlain now holds was reserved for him, when he should return to this country. He returned, but did not feel at liberty to accept it. Lord John Russell wrote to me, and explained the reason why Lord Palmerston found that he could not ask me to join his Government; and it was this—that I had expressed opinions, or an opinion, about an institution in this country which the country thought important and essential, and that there were persons whose support was necessary to his Government who told him that that support would be withheld if I became a member of his Administration. Well, I should have uttered no menaces—a foolish thing for me to do—against the House of Lords; but if I were particularly anxious that the House of Lords should endure as long as the sun and the moon, I should say it would be much better to have some regard for the interests and sufferings of the population of Ireland than to rush up in a crowd and reject a measure which those

entrusted with the administration of the country declared, upon their authority and their conscience, to be necessary for the peace of the nation.' (Loud applause.)

With regard to the remedy for the existing condition of things in Ireland, Mr. Bright said :—

' Force is not a remedy. (Cheers.) There are times when it may be necessary, and when its employment may be absolutely unavoidable ; but, for my part, I should rather regard and discuss measures of relief as measures of remedy than measures of force, whose influence is only temporary, and in the long run, I believe, is disastrous. (Cheers.) I don't now refer to some of the remedies you have heard of—violent and impossible schemes, where tenants are apparently to fix their own rents, under which, as a body, the landlords are to be got rid of and banished ; or where the Government is to undertake some gigantic transaction—raising two or three hundreds of millions of money to buy them out of their estates, and to convey the estates over to the farmers who now cultivate them. Now, I believe that the extravagant, and the impossible, and the unjust is not required even in a case so serious, it may be so desperate, as this. Those propositions, which no Government can listen to, which no people can submit to—those propositions, depend upon it, are made by men who in their hearts hate England much more than they love the farmers of their own country.'

The right hon. gentleman went on to observe that the Irish farmers were in the main industrious and honest, and that there had been no country in Europe in which rents had been more generally and constantly and fairly paid than in Ireland until the recent troubles. He believed that it was possible to frame a measure that would satisfy the great bulk of the Irish tenant-farmers, and before long withdraw them from the influences of men who would lead them into calamities not less than those which they now complained of and endured. Some mode must be instituted by which a man should not be subjected any day to a notice to quit, or by means of which his rent should not be constantly added to, so that going out of his farm was a less evil than remaining in it. He wanted security from constant torture and menace, and a broad and generous system established by Government by which landowners who were willing to sell—and there must always be many such—and tenants who were willing to buy should be able to come to terms, and thus gradually, year by year, add to the number of the proprietary farmers in Ireland. Five or ten millions would be well spent in bringing this question to a successful issue.

Mr. Bright said he was stating his own opinions only, and not those of the Government. 'I am saying what I should say if I had never been a member of a Government, and what I should say next week if I this week ceased to be a member of the Government.' Force, the old manner of dealing with Ireland, he could not believe would ever arrest the discontent which existed, or provide a remedy for the widespread disaffection which all of them deplored. The Administration might find great difficulty and danger to themselves in dealing with this question; but he believed that any measure on the basis he had indicated would have the effect of improving the value of all landed property in Ireland. An Irish member of Parliament had told him that a measure giving security of tenure would add ten years' purchase to the value of the landed property of Ireland. 'Therefore,' observed Mr. Bright, 'let no man say that I who speak, and you who listen and applaud—that we are enemies to the proprietary classes. I should think it a misfortune in this country and in Ireland if there were no proprietary class. There is a proprietary class in France, and in the countries of the Continent. But that there should be only a great proprietary class having everything in its hands—the honour and the lives of the people—is a condition of things that ought not to exist, and cannot be permitted to continue.'

Some portions of this speech appear to have given great umbrage to Lord Carnarvon. His lordship accordingly wrote a long letter to Mr. Bright, dated from Madeira, and the communication was published in the London daily journals. Lord Carnarvon complained chiefly of Mr. Bright's 'tender reproofs of the breakers of law and contracts in Ireland,' of his reference to the long list of crimes committed by monarchs, and of his strictures on the hostile attitude of the House of Lords to popular reforms. He expressed his astonishment that with such views Mr. Bright could remain a Minister of the Crown. To his lordship's letter Mr. Bright replied as follows, on the 25th of December: 'Your letter of December 7th, which appeared in the London papers of yesterday morning, reached me last night. You comment on my speech of November 16th, and find in it terrible blemishes, which have not been discovered

by its critics in this country. You condemn me for attacks on the Sovereign, the aristocracy, and the landowners. I have defended the monarchy. The defence is little needed in this country, and in this reign. I have warned the aristocracy of the danger I wished them to shun. As to landowners, I have been one of the most prominent of the supporters of a policy so necessary for the country, and so wise for them, that, had it been obstinately resisted, the great landowners of England and Scotland would long ago have been running for their lives, as some Irish landowners are reported to be doing now. I will not reply at length to your letter: it is enough to acknowledge the receipt of it. I am content to leave my speech and your letter to the judgment of the public.' It was the general opinion of the press upon this correspondence that Lord Carnarvon would have done well to remain in strict seclusion in Madeira.

The principle of arbitration between hostile states and nations is one which Mr. Bright has always advocated, wherever this principle could be acted upon with advantage. But there are crises in the history of peoples where this is impossible. This Mr. Bright remarked in a letter which he addressed at the beginning of the year 1880 to Mr. Alfred H. Love, of Philadelphia. It was read at a meeting of the Philadelphia Peace Society, and Mr. Love explained that it had been received in reply to a communication sent to Mr. Bright by the Connecticut Peace Society, held in Mystic in the previous September, asking him to convey to Mr. Gladstone a series of resolutions adopted at the convention, urging universal arbitration, and specifying certain cases in which it might be employed. After expressing his disinclination to convey to Mr. Gladstone the enclosed resolutions, and suggesting that they should be sent direct by the Society to the Prime Minister, Mr. Bright discussed the question presented in the resolution, and said: 'There are cases in which it cannot be applied. Many such cases present themselves to your mind.' It is not applicable to the cases you specify, as your own history—the history of the United States—affords examples of cases in which nothing can be done by arbitration. Who could have arbitrated between the colonies of North

America and the England of George III.; or who could have interfered with advantage between the slave-power and the Government of your country in the year 1861? It is not a justification of war to say that in many cases between nations arbitration is an impossible remedy. Arbitration is often good; it may be, and I doubt not will be, more and more frequently adopted; but there are cases, and not a few, when it cannot be called in with any advantage. What is wanted is a stronger sense of the evil of war, and of the crime of which it is the cause, and a desire on the part of all Christian men to suppress it. Then men will look on disputed questions without passion, and will strive to settle them without bloodshed; and will refuse to make the tremendous sacrifices which wars involve at the bidding of ambitious and wicked rulers and statesmen.'

While the unhappy Transvaal war was in course of settlement a memorial was presented to Mr. Bright on the subject by M. Buisson, a French journalist resident in London. The memorial emanated from a number of leading French Liberals, being signed by about thirty members of the French Senate, by certain Deputies, and members of the Paris Municipal Council, the French Academy, &c. Among the signatures were those of M. Victor Hugo, M. Ernest Rénan, M. Legouvé, M. Carnot, M. Scheurer-Kestner, and the late President of the Municipal Council of Paris. Mr. Bright wrote to M. Buisson, formally acknowledging the presentation, as follows, his letter being dated March 23, 1881:—'I was glad to have the opportunity of speaking to you yesterday during your short visit, when you presented to me an address on the subject of the Transvaal war from the eminent French Liberals whose names I find appended to it. They have done me great honour in selecting me as in any manner worthy to be considered a representative of the friends of "international justice, peace, and goodwill between nations." I accept the address with much pleasure, and I can ask now to be permitted to rejoice with them in the happy settlement of a difficulty and of a conflict which has excited in their minds, as in mine, so deep a grief. I believe the English people will gladly sustain a Government which has restored peace



by a course at once magnanimous and just, and I feel entire confidence that its policy will be approved in all foreign countries by "friends of international justice, peace, and goodwill between nations." I ask you to convey to the eminent Frenchmen who have signed the address my warm thanks for the great compliment they have paid me.\*

Early in the year 1881 considerable dissatisfaction sprang up in certain circles on the question of Free Trade, and the cry of 'Reciprocity' was raised. Amongst others who spoke in favour of a partial Protectionist policy was Mr. Hermon, the senior member for Preston, in his annual address to his constituents. An elector having forwarded a copy of the speech to Mr. Bright, the right hon. gentleman replied as follows, in a letter dated the 18th of March: 'I have read Mr. Hermon's speech to which you refer me. I am not amazed at the ignorance it displays or its misrepresentation of facts. He does not tell how he proposes to protect by new tariff duties the factory-workers or the mill-workers of Preston. His constituents are exporters of cotton goods to all quarters of the

\* M. Buisson subsequently published in the *Temps* an interesting account of his interview with Mr. Bright. The following translation of this article was furnished by the correspondent of the *Times* in Paris: 'All Mr. Bright's surroundings, like all he says and does, are unpretentious. American Ministers cannot be more easy of access or have more democratic manners. He occupies one of the plainest houses in Piccadilly. The serious, thoughtful countenance of the most popular of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues is well known. On a near view of Mr. Bright you at once feel yourself in the presence of a conscience ever alive to the idea of duty and responsibility. There is no doubt that he partly owes these habits of reflection and of austerity to his Quaker education, that sect numerically so small but morally so influential; but there are evidently also in his nature meditative instincts which the Puritanism of the Society of Friends has simply developed. Several of my countrymen, among whom I may name my eminent *confrère* M. John Lemoine, had been afraid that English susceptibilities would be wounded at seeing Frenchmen interfere in their affairs. I will not anticipate the written reply Mr. Bright has promised me to the address, but I may already tell you that on this point French friends of the Transvaal may be reassured. Mr. Bright's reception at once showed that he regarded the step as calculated not to embarrass but to strengthen the Government which has the courage of its opinion and will acknowledge a mistake. On scanning the signatures, which, I must confess, were not all legible, Mr. Bright humorously remarked that Americans are almost alone in the habit of signing their names legibly. On coming to Victor Hugo's name he told me that our great poet had a certain resemblance to the great thinker whose loss England is now deploring—Carlyle; Rénan and Henri Martin also attracted his attention. The latest news from the Transvaal, he told me, was encouraging. While mentioning certain precautions which England deems it proper to take with the Boers, Mr. Bright, with his usual frankness, did not hesitate to acknowledge that England had gone beyond her rights.'

globe ; they compete with all foreign manufacturers in all foreign markets. How can he protect them by reimposing duties on the import of cotton goods which they so largely export ? Does he intend to give a bounty out of the general taxes on all goods they export, as he says "he would give a bonus on every acre of land that a farmer of this country chooses to till and crop with corn ?" He proposes to give out of the taxes a bonus—how much he does not say, but so much per acre on all land growing corn, doubtless to enable the farmers to pay a higher rent than the land is worth, and to limit our supplies of corn from the United States, Canada, and other countries. Mr. Hermon did not tell his audience that between the harvests of 1879 and 1880—that is, in the year after the bad harvest of 1879—out of every four loaves of the bread eaten by the people of the United Kingdom three loaves came from abroad, and that in no other year in his lifetime or in mine have our people been fed so cheaply or on bread of such excellent quality. What must Mr. Hermon think of the mental condition of his constituents when he ventured to utter to them the confused nonsense of his speech, and what must every intelligent elector of your town think of a representative in Parliament who has not advanced a step beyond the benighted ignorance of forty years ago ?' Mr. Bright concluded by recommending both his correspondent and Mr. Hermon to read Mr. Mongredien's little work on 'Free Trade and English Commerce,' out of which they might learn much of correct facts and sound arguments on the question of Free Trade, and on the results of our policy as adopted by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone since the year 1841.

Communications continued to reach Mr. Bright on this subject, and on the 29th of March he wrote a letter to a Yorkshire gentleman, in which he discussed the question of Free Trade at length. In this communication he said :—

'We all regret that France, the United States of America, and other countries continue to maintain their high tariffs ; it is, we believe, a misfortune to them and injurious to us ; but we can only legislate for our country, and not for them. If you think that, not being able to sell freely, we should mend ourselves by giving up the power to buy freely, I must leave you to that opinion, only expressing my wonder at

it. But you will perhaps say that we can force other nations to reduce their tariffs if we impose a tariff against them. You forget, probably, that we have tried this in past times, and that it has wholly failed. Sir Robert Peel taught this nearly forty years ago; and he believed, as I believe, that the best defence we can have against the evils of foreign tariffs is to have no tariff of our own. You speak of France. The French Senate is in favour of more protection. The Chamber of Deputies is disposed to Free Trade and a more liberal policy. The Free Trade party in France is more powerful than in past times, and it is not certain that the proposed treaty will be less favourable to trade between the two countries. As to America, how will you compel its Government to reduce their tariff? By placing duties on American exports to England? If so, on what exports?—on cotton for the mills of Lancashire, or on corn for the food of all our people? The American protective tariff makes it difficult or impossible for Americans to become great exporters of manufactures. If you fight them at the Custom-houses, you can only assail them by duties on cotton or on corn, and this surely will not benefit Lancashire or the West Riding. When the debt of the United States is much reduced, when their revenue is in excess of their wants, then their tariff will be reformed and their import duties will be reduced. If you doubt what Free Trade has done for England, go back to your histories and read what was the condition of our working men and their families for the first forty years of this century, when everything was supposed to be protected, and compare it with what it is now. For some years past manufacturers and farmers have suffered greatly, and workmen have suffered much, but they have not seen one-tenth part of the distress which afflicted them during the forty years of high duties from 1800 to 1840. The country suffers now, not from our purified tariff, and not wholly, or in chief part, from foreign tariffs. It suffers from want of sunshine—from the short harvests of several years; and till we have again good harvests we must suffer and endure. Parliament cannot give sun and heat for our fields; it will be no compensation to reimpose import duties, and to deny us the right to purchase freely what we need from foreign nations.'

Being requested by a third correspondent to give his opinion upon 'the question of Reciprocity *versus* Free Trade,' as it affected Bradford, Mr. Bright replied: 'The home trade is bad mainly or entirely because our harvests have been bad for several years. I believe the agricultural classes—owners and occupiers of land in the three kingdoms—have lost more than £150,000,000 through the great deficiency of our harvests. This great loss must inevitably and seriously depress all our other industries. It is not Bradford alone that has suffered; Rochdale, in its flannel trade, has suffered; the whole cotton trade of Lancashire has suffered greatly; and much of all this is to be attributed to the condition of our great farming interest, and this again to the unfavourable seasons of several recent years. The remedy will come with more sunshine and better

yield from the land ; without this it cannot come. To imagine that your suffering springs now from hostile tariffs is absurd, because you have had great prosperity with the same tariffs ; but to suppose your case will be improved by refusing to buy what you want from foreigners, to punish them for not buying freely from you, seems to me an idea and a scheme only worthy of the inmates of a lunatic asylum. To return to Protection under the name of Reciprocity is to confess to the Protectionists abroad that we have been wrong and that they are right, and Protection will henceforth be the justified policy of all nations. If Protection is needful and good, surely at this moment it is needful for our farming class ; and yet who dares to propose another sliding scale or a fixed duty on the import of foreign corn ? Bradford must be watchful and patient to look out for new markets or new products for her looms, and to endure a temporary reverse, to be followed, I trust, at no remote period with a revival of prosperity. Bradford has had a good "innings" since 1860 ; she gained more than other towns from Mr. Cobden's treaty with France. Great success and great expansion of business are followed by depression, to be followed, I hope and believe, by a return to a fair measure of prosperity. But our recovery depends more on the produce of our harvests than on foreign tariffs, or on the changes in the fashion of dress to which you refer.'

The fallacies current upon this question of Free Trade and Reciprocity will certainly appear very extraordinary to those who look into the subject. It cannot be denied, for example, that not only are the various classes of the labouring population of this country far better clothed, housed, and fed than they were in the days of Protection, but that they are in a much better position than the same classes are in many countries where the Protective system is still in vogue. Our workmen can also produce their goods more cheaply than formerly, and when the special circumstances which have caused a reverse in trade shall have passed away it will be found that the policy of Free Trade will still maintain us in a superior position as compared with other nations. The capacity to absorb increasing exports, moreover, is not a sign either of the failure of trade or the ascendancy of other nations over ourselves, but really points

to a greater wealth amongst us as the legitimate outcome of the last thirty-five years of Free Trade. The manner in which the great and growing population of this country has been enabled to pass through recent disasters and shocks to trade, and the way in which our great industries have recovered themselves, furnish striking evidence of the soundness and wisdom of our Free Trade policy. To adopt a system of retaliation in this matter on the ground of the exceptional reverses from which we are suffering—reverses which may largely, almost entirely, be accounted for by natural laws—would be to put back the dial of our social and commercial progress.

On the 14th of June 1881 Sir W. Lawson once more brought forward the subject of the liquor traffic in the House of Commons, when he moved, 'That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable to give legislative effect to the resolution passed on the 18th of June, 1880, which affirms the justice of local communities being entrusted with the power to protect themselves from the operation of the liquor traffic.' Mr. Bright, in speaking upon the resolution, pointed out that it did not commit the House to the Permissive Bill, which he had always opposed as the greatest obstacle to temperance legislation, but only to the proposition that the present licensing system was bad, and might be improved. This was evidently the opinion of the country at the last election, and the House had passed a similar resolution last year. But he denied that that resolution bound the Government to any particular course, nor would it be committed to take charge of any measure which might flow from this resolution. He insisted on this because the present session was fully occupied, and when the Land Bill was passed there would probably be no time for other measures. But even though the Government did introduce a bill, it might not be altogether acceptable to Sir Wilfrid Lawson on such points as compensation and restriction, instead of abolition. Moreover, there were other important questions to be dealt with, such as the land laws, county franchise, &c., for which public opinion might be more ripe than on this question. 'My hon. friend,' said Mr. Bright, in conclusion, 'may take comfort in this—that although the Government are not prepared now to introduce or promote any bill upon the question,

the agitation among the people, the discussion of the question going on hereafter, as it has gone on during the last few years, will create a movement of opinion which not only will compel some Government to deal with the question, but enable any Government to deal with it in a manner which will be effective and satisfactory.' The motion was carried by a majority of 42, the numbers being—for the resolution, 196; against, 154.

The session of 1881 was almost entirely devoted to Ireland. Unfortunately, before Mr. Gladstone could introduce his promised Land Bill, the Government were obliged to bring forward a Coercion Bill. The information which the Irish Executive possessed of the disturbed and lawless condition of certain districts in Ireland rendered this step absolutely necessary. That it was one repugnant to every member of the Liberal Government need scarcely be said; but by the close of December it had become obvious that coercion was inevitable. In January, accordingly, soon after the meeting of Parliament, Mr. Forster introduced the bill, which was fiercely debated. Some of the Irish members charged Mr. Bright with inconsistency, citing in proof of this extracts made from his speeches on the Irish question.

On the 28th of January, in his speech upon the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the right hon. gentleman defended himself, and gave his reasons why he was compelled to be the unwilling advocate of restrictive measures. He remarked with regard to former repressive measures that he had never denied their necessity, but he had complained that they were not accompanied by remedial measures, and that no case of grievance was admitted. So, he added, if this bill had stood alone, and if it were not notorious that it was to be accompanied by a large remedial measure for the admitted grievances of Ireland he would not be sitting on the Treasury bench at that moment. Without going into the figures, and leaving the case confidently as it had been stated by Mr. Forster, he held that the deplorable condition of Ireland was fully established by private letters from all classes and conditions of men, by the accounts of the Irish refugees, and by the boast of the Land Leaguers that they had superseded the law of Parliament. He had always con-

demned the condition of the land tenure of Ireland, but without pronouncing any judgment on the legality of the Land League, he asserted that the results of it were illegal and in the highest degree mischievous.

Replying to the argument that the Land League agitation was to be defended on the same grounds as the Anti-Corn-Law League agitation, with which it was alleged to be parallel, Mr. Bright said :—

‘If your League were conducted as our League was, I should not have opposed you. I should have sent you a subscription and become one of your members. Does any one suppose that my right hon. friend, the member for Wolverhampton, then the Parliamentary leader of that agitation, ever used such language as we have heard from that bench during the present session? Can any one find in any of my speeches, or of those of the member for Wolverhampton, any passage which leads to the condition of things which not only exists in Ireland, but is boasted of by the voice and with the approbation of gentlemen opposite? (Cheers.) Strong language was used. I am not a bit ashamed of strong language. It is sometimes even necessary. (A laugh.) I recollect a passage in a speech of one of my friends who once sat on this side of the House—I mean Mr. Fox, who was member for Oldham—in which he said, “The Corn Law is the harvest of death as well as of the landowners, and monopoly says to corruption, ‘Thou art my brother.’” And that was a strong expression, though it was true. But that language did not stimulate any man to violence. We had branches all over the country, just as the Land League has; and active men in every district—in the boroughs, and in many of the villages in the country. But it was never said that any single person in any of those branches adopted the practice which has become common in your branches. (Cheers.) We have heard lately of the Land League courts. (Hear, hear.) At the time of our agitation there were many incendiary fires in the east of England, particularly, I believe, in Suffolk. But all we did was to ask Parliament to grant a Commission to inquire into the cause of them; and not a single word of ours in the House or out of it, or any single line written in our accredited organs, ever stimulated to crime—either those I just mentioned, or any others. (Cheers and counter-cheers—“Oh! oh!”) If that be so, one is driven to the conclusion that your population are less indisposed to crimes or offences of this kind than our population. It has always been my wish, in anything that I have said in the last thirty years, never to cast a slight or a stigma or a slur upon your people. I could spend a few minutes in dwelling upon the virtues of the Irish people, and I believe their offences and their crimes and their vices arise rather from the condition into which those who should be their superiors have brought them—(loud cheers)—than from their own hearts. No, Sir, in our agitation there was no language, no teaching, in favour of any crimes, any outrage, any terror. I call to witness every man who remembers the time that our speeches, strong as they might be, condemnatory as they might be of the law which we condemned, hostile as they were to the landowners, were still always conceived

in a moral and an elevated tone, and directed the people to their own political friends, and to the element of justice in Parliament, to seek the remedy for their grievances. (Cheers.) But what have these gentlemen done? 'They have to a large extent demoralised the people whom they profess to befriend.' (Loud and continued cheering.)

Mr. Bright then referred to the progress which had been made in Ireland during the past fifty years, illustrating it by a rise in wages, a better dressed and better fed population, and other arguments; and observing that it was a grievous trouble to members of the present Administration to be compelled to submit a measure like this, he added, in conclusion: 'It is only under a solemn sense of duty, from which it is impossible to shrink, that we ask the House to support us in a measure of restriction—restriction, as we believe, to the few, and I have no doubt, as it will be exercised, a measure of mercy to the many. This bill will only be temporary. Many persons, not so scrupulous as we are on these matters, will say that it ought to be continued for a longer period than the 1st of September next year. We hope the disturbing elements will only be temporary, and that the measure, therefore, will only be temporary. I trust that the Land Bill, when it comes before the House—and the sooner this bill is disposed of the sooner the Land Bill will be on this table—will be a great and a comprehensive measure, and that it will be a durable monument to the memory of this Parliament and of the Administration of which my right hon. friend is the head.'

The Suspension Bill, after protracted discussions, passed through both Houses and became law, and it had a salutary operation in checking much of the lawlessness which prevailed in the perturbed districts of Ireland.

On the 7th of April, in a house crowded in every part, Mr. Gladstone introduced the Irish Land Bill. He explained that the salient point and cardinal principle of the measure was the institution of a court which was to take cognisance of rent, and which, in taking cognisance of rent, would also, according to the provisions of the bill, not be debarred from taking cognisance of assignment. In discussing the relations of landlord and tenant in Ireland, he



detailed the instances in which advances would be required from the public Exchequer; and in further elucidating the principles upon which the measure was founded, he pointed out that it was proposed to set up a system of limited and regulated freedom of contract between the landlord and the tenant, wherein, in consideration of the circumstances of Ireland, the tenant should, notwithstanding, be fortified by certain provisions of the law as to his right of sale, and as to guarantees against arbitrary increase of rent. This would be restrained by certain rules. Compensation for disturbance would be regulated according to different rates, and the right to sell the tenant's interest would be universally established. In a beautiful peroration, with which he closed a speech which had occupied two hours and a half in delivery, Mr. Gladstone observed: 'Justice, Sir, is to be our guide. It has been said that love is stronger than death, and so justice is stronger than popular excitement, than the passion of the moment, than even the grudges and resentments and sad traditions of the past. Walking in that path, we cannot err. Guided by that light—that Divine light—we are safe. Every step we make upon our road is a step that brings us nearer to the goal; and every obstacle, even although it seems for the moment insurmountable, can only for a little while retard, and never can defeat, the final triumph.'

The first occasion upon which Mr. Bright expressed his views on the Land Bill was on the 28th of April, at a banquet given to Her Majesty's Ministers by the Court of Assistants of the Fishmongers' Company. The right hon. gentleman was called upon to respond for the House of Commons. Having recalled his experiences of Parliament when he first took his seat in 1843, he dealt with the Irish question, and on the necessity for a Coercion Act he remarked: 'If it were conceivable that every landowner in Ireland had a charmed life, and there was no danger to the landowner or the agent, still now, in the state in which Ireland has been of late, it would be necessary to take some measures which would tend to protect the lives of a class which is not landowning or connected with land agency, but which is of the common run of the population of the agricultural portion of the country. I thought

it necessary to say that. There is no class in the country which is more in need of tranquillity and order than those who have to remain at home engaged in ordinary industrial occupations.' But coercion was only temporary; the real remedy after all—and the one which would be permanent—was land reform. Coming to the Government bill, Mr. Bright said :—

'With regard to this Irish measure to which Lord Hartington referred, I had an interesting letter from Ireland some weeks ago, in which the writer concluded by saying, "If you will secure the tenant you will secure the landlord." (Hear, hear.) And the object of the bill really is for the purpose of giving as much security, and certainly not more, to the tenant as to the landlord, and to give him the greatest possible stimulus for the exertion of his industry. And if that be the effect of the measure, there can be no manner of doubt that it must be of the greatest advantage to the landlord. (Hear, hear.) I believe the effect of this bill when it comes into operation will be to steady the price of land in Ireland. The price now is scarcely anything. Land cannot be sold generally over the country. But suppose the landlord be shorn of anything, of what are called rights—great power over individual tenants—his rent, if in some degree moderate, will be secured. He will be able to live among a population who no longer distrust him and hate his agent, and among whom he may dwell in comfort and security such as in many parts of Ireland for a long time he has not been able to enjoy. The bill of the Government, as you may be sure, is in all the circumstances the best bill that could be offered to Parliament. It is impossible for any Government to work more steadily than that of Mr. Gladstone. There never was the head of a Government more capable, more anxious to do good, than Mr. Gladstone. (Cheers.) Well, that being so, those members of the House of Commons who are supporters of Mr. Gladstone should have patience in some cases; they should have trust in other cases that the Government will do all that they possibly can in the circumstances in which they are placed; and if they give that confidence to the Government, I have no doubt that the Government will as far as possible justify the confidence reposed in them. It is not for me as a member of the Government to pass an eulogium upon it for what it has done or intends to do. But this I can say fairly and honestly, knowing intimately all its members: I believe there is no Government—and I do not think we shall have any—that can more rightly claim the confidence and the honest and generous support of the Liberal party in the House of Commons and the Liberal party throughout the country.' (Cheers.)

Before the debate on the second reading of the Irish Land Bill was brought to a conclusion in the House of Commons a debate arose upon another important Irish question. On the 6th of May Mr. Callan moved the following resolution: 'That in the opinion of this House it is expedient and necessary that measures should be taken in the present session of Parliament to improve the

condition of agricultural labourers' habitations in Ireland.' The hon. member said that the Land Bill of 1870 had, when introduced, a clause affecting the condition of the Irish labourer, but that provision was unwisely and uncharitably expunged by the House of Lords. The Government then pledged themselves that in the following year a measure would be introduced dealing in a large spirit with the condition of the labourers in Ireland, but no bill was introduced either in that or the following years of the last Liberal Government. For the sake of the credit and honour of England, he appealed to the Government to deal with this question.

Mr. Bright spoke during the debate, and said that there was no kind of conjuring by which the condition of the labourer could be improved, except by stimulating the industry of the country. He was ready to agree to anything which the Irish members could propose that had even the probability of being useful to the labourers. But the Irish labourer had now more than double, perhaps three times, the wages he had a little over thirty years ago. Speaking of the neglect of manufactures in Ireland, Mr. Bright said: 'I do not see why, if there was that spirit amongst the Irish classes—I am not speaking of the poor labourer, but of the middle classes—why in the name of common sense is it that during the last hundred years there has not been a single manufactory of any importance established and sustained in Ireland? (Cheers.) Why is it that water runs from Loch Corrib into Galway Harbour, and there is nothing done with it? If it were in America it would be used. If it were in Great Britain it would be used. Why is it not used in Ireland? It is not a sufficient answer to say that the land laws are bad. (Hear, hear.) Our land laws are bad. But what we have done has been in the teeth of a system of land laws which is in some respects even worse than that of Ireland. I think Irish members and Irish gentlemen everywhere ought to ask themselves whether it is not possible, amongst the middle classes in that country, to do something to utilise the vast stores of water they have, and the many advantages they have. There is no single disadvantage, except that they have not a supply of coals as good

as we have. (An Irish member—"Nor capital.") As to capital, do you suppose that the people of Great Britain would send their capital to every quarter of the globe, and lose scores if not hundreds of millions of it within the last few years—do you suppose they would not invest their capital if there was a disposition on the part of the Irish people to make use of this capital—(cheers)—and to convince the people of England that their capital was secure?’

The Irish, continued Mr. Bright, were rather cleverer than the English or Scotch, yet, although they beat us in many things, they did not beat us in industry. The condition of the Irish labourers and their dwellings was a disgrace to the country. ‘I do not know whether they are a disgrace to the Government or not, but we may divide the blame, perhaps, between the Government and the Irish people. If hon. members can suggest any plan which is practicable, which does not rob somebody else, that is an honest, practicable plan by which the condition of the labourers can be improved, they will find no members of this House more anxious than the Government to adopt it, and no member more anxious to further it than they will find myself.’

Mr. Callan's resolution was agreed to, after the excision of the words ‘in the present session of Parliament.’

The debate on the second reading of the Land Bill in the Commons was most protracted, extending over several weeks. On the 9th of May Mr. Bright addressed the House in support of the bill. He first passed some strictures upon the speech of Sir John Holker, who had declared he would vote against the measure because he was a Conservative, and was opposed to unnecessary infringement of the laws of property. The right hon. gentleman then went on to state his opinion that at the present moment Great Britain was longing to be just, and even generous, to Ireland. He thought it would be wise on the part of the landowners not to reject a measure which might possibly hereafter be followed by one that they would not like any better. What was wanted in Ireland was a measure securing adequate rent to the landlord and adequate security to the tenant. These, he strongly believed, would be

secured by the present bill. 'What we want to do by this bill,' said Mr. Bright, 'is to drive famine, and poverty, and suffering, and discontent from Ireland. I believe it can only be done by measures such as this. We have in the past history of Ireland just this—on the one side repeated confiscation, penal laws, Acts in restraint of the constitution, Coercion Acts in their many hurtful forms: we have had a recent and unhappy acquaintance with them. On the other side, we have suffering, and discontent, and crime, and I am sorry to say, in some cases, crime such as the records of savages (if savages had records) could hardly excel for darkness and cruelty. These are things which ought to shock the members of the Legislature, and draw them with an irresistible impulse to find some mode of changing the condition of the people, which has not been creditable to the Government of the country.'

Mr. Bright said the House could not rest with matters as they were. They must either go forward, as they proposed to go, or go back. Going back meant that they must govern Ireland with a constabulary and with a great army. They would be very soon driven to suspend trial by jury, to abolish freedom of the press and the freedom of public meeting. 'It is said,' continued the right hon. gentleman, 'that the bill makes concessions to tenants. Nobody denies that, least of all those who have taken pains to frame the bill. It does make concessions to tenants, and at the same time—and that is the supposed cause of its intricacy—the bill contains some safeguards, placed so that, as far as it is desirable or possible with justice to the tenant, the interests of the landlord should be preserved. Now, the idea of the English system is a complete delusion—I speak of Ireland; I am not speaking of the English system in England. It will remain in England until Parliament, by public opinion, thinks it necessary to make changes. (Cheers.) I have no idea, and no belief, and no suspicion that it will be ever needful in Great Britain to make changes such as those this bill is intended to make in Ireland. But in Ireland you have the question of race, you have the question of religion, you have the question of absenteeism; you have the circumstances of great estates managed continually by agency, and, in fact, everything in Ireland is at war







RIGHT HONOURABLE THE M<sup>R</sup>QUIS OF HARTINGTON.

PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER OF DERBYSHIRE.





with the English system. Therefore you are condemned to have recourse to laws which are very different from what we have in England, and which I trust and hope never will be necessary in this country.' In a very forcible passage, Mr. Bright added: 'To the complaint that the bill gives so much to the tenants and takes it all from the landlords I should make this answer: If at this moment all that has been done by the tenant in Ireland were gone, imagine that—if all that the tenants have done were gone, and all that the owners have done left—(Liberal cheers)—that is the picture, the sort of map I should very much like to see; it would be charming; it would finish this debate in five minutes—(Liberal cheers and laughter)—if this map were drawn; then over nine-tenths of Ireland the land would be as bare of houses, of barns, of fences, and of cultivation as it was in prehistoric times. It would be as bare as an American prairie where the Indian now roams, and where the foot of the white man has never yet trodden.' (Hear, hear.)

Being interrupted by Col. Tottenham, and asked for figures, Mr. Bright said he was stating no more than what was stated thirty-five years before by the greatest of all the Commissions—the Commission presided over by Lord Devon. In the matter of rents, landlords had in hundreds, probably thousands, of cases received over and over again the value of that which tenants had placed upon their farms. For himself, he had a special affection for that part of the bill which tended to convert to a very large extent the tenant-farmers into farmers who were owners of their land. If land was to be made secure in Ireland, it must be by a system which, dividing and dispersing the land, would furnish it and its rights with a multitude of defenders. That was exactly what one of the principal portions of the bill was intended to secure to landed property in Ireland. Mr. Bright's peroration, which in the outset dealt with the Emigration question, was as follows:—

'The hon. member for Cork (Mr. Parnell) found some fault in his speeches outside the House with regard to the bill. He objected to what was said about emigration, and that nothing was said about the labourers. The bill indicates nothing of the kind that any single Irish man or woman will be compelled or lured to leave the country and cross the Atlantic. No less than ninety-five thousand persons emigrated from Ireland last year—(cheers)—and if the reports we see in the papers are correct,

it seems that now emigration is going on at a greater rate than it was at this time last year. I put it to the hon. member for Cork if the great mercantile steamers were to anchor at Cork or Galway, and to offer free passages to the families of all the population of Connaught, how many would remain behind? Probably he would say the whole of the population of Connaught; but I have not the least doubt the half of them would find their way in a very short time to the United States. That is a country which opens its door to everybody. The Minister of the United States in this country (Mr. Lowell), a man who has put as much wisdom as wit into his poems, in describing that country, says—

“ Whose very latch-string never was drawn in  
Against the poorest child of Adam's kin.”

(Cheers.) Therefore, whilst the bill does not propose to offer any inducement, except such as the population now have, to any single Irish family to emigrate, yet I am bound to say I believe it would be far better for a great number of those families to be settled in the better parts of Canada and the United States than to remain where they are, or to be removed from where they are to any of those tracts of land which at a certain expense, not easily ascertained—(hear, hear)—might in Ireland be made fit for habitation. So that I trust that these families that will go, and that are going—notwithstanding the violent passions that are excited in America by statements that are—some of them—not true, and some of them wildly exaggerated,—I trust there are persons going to the United States who before long will find, and will hear from the old country, that her miseries are abating, and that justice is being done, and that the disloyalty and the suffering that we have had so much to regret are in a great part removed. (Hear, hear.) And with regard to the labourers, to whom the hon. member for Cork has referred, I believe nothing will do so much good for them as anything that will induce farmers to cultivate their land better. (Hear, hear.) What shall I say about this bill? If the portion of it which deals with the relations of landlord and tenant is worked with fairness, if the other portion—the purchase clauses and powers—is worked with energy, I dare to hope and believe we shall find it a measure of healing and blessing to the Irish people—(loud cheers)—and I ask hon. members on every side of the House not to imagine that the bill was not framed with a great intention, and honestly, and with a great purpose. (Hear, hear.) Let them support, as far as they can, the bill, and the Government which has introduced it to the House. This night, and every night, the House prays in language that always strikes me as very touching and very beautiful. As the representatives of the nation we pray to Heaven for the peace and tranquillity of the realm. It is for the peace and tranquillity of the realm that this bill has been drawn up and proposed to the House; and it is with the hope that if it passes it will tend to that end, that we, with great confidence and not with fear, ask for it the acceptance and the sanction of Parliament.’ (Loud cheers.)

The second reading of the Irish Land Bill was eventually carried on the 19th of May, an amendment by Lord Elcho being defeated by the large majority of 352 votes to 176. In Committee the dis-

cussions were renewed, and at one time it seemed almost impossible that the bill could be sent up to the House of Lords in time to be carried during the current session. After many delays, however, the measure passed the Commons amid enthusiastic cheering, and was despatched to the Upper House.

On the 8th of August Mr. Bright was amongst the guests present at the Ministerial banquet at the Mansion House. Mr. Gladstone responded with happy eloquence and effect to the toast of the evening, 'Her Majesty's Ministers;' and after the Marquis of Hartington had responded for the House of Commons there were loud and repeated calls for Mr. Bright. At first the right hon. gentleman declined to answer the call; but upon its being persistently renewed he rose and complied with the wishes of the assembled guests. 'I had expected,' he said, 'not to be one of the speakers, and the pleasure of being permitted to enjoy that tranquil obscurity in which persons have the advantage of listening and the privilege of remaining silent was one to which I thought on this occasion I might aspire. But I observe that the members of the Government who have already spoken—the Prime Minister, Lord Hartington, and Lord Kimberley—have come hot from the Houses of Parliament which they represent. They remind me of an anecdote which my dear friend, the late Mr. Cobden, once narrated to me. He told me that at the end of a session a member of the House, who had a yacht, and who spent the autumn in the Mediterranean, invited him to go with him, saying that he would invite three or four other members of the House, and that they would all have a nice time of it. Mr. Cobden replied that he had seen so much of hon. members during the session that he did not wish to see another for other six months to come.'

After remarking that the House of Commons wanted repairs of an extensive character, Mr. Bright went on to discuss the great measure of the session—the Land Bill. Respecting this he said :—

'I believe that this measure is as great and as noble a measure on that question as it would be possible for the English Parliament to pass; that it is one which it is impossible, when it becomes law, that the Irish people should not discover to be a great measure of satisfaction and redemption for them, unless they are unable to understand a policy intended directly for their benefit. (Cheers.) I have said that

there are fears. I have fears. After the state of things through which the Irish people have gone in so many successive periods it is not, perhaps, quite certain that all remedial measures are not too late. I will not express a strong fear that such is the case; on the contrary, I will express a strong hope that such is not the case. It may be that some would say—

“ For never can true reconciliation grow  
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep ; ”

but as generation after generation passes, governed by a monarchy kindly, liberal, beneficent like ours, legislated for by a Parliament anxious to do justice to all the people under its sway, I will not doubt, I will believe, that whatever may be the passion, whatever the frenzy, in the minds of the Irish people, whatever the gloom that now rests on that country, all this may pass away, and that the time may come, and come soon, when in Ireland it shall be felt as much as it is felt in England, that, with all its faults, our Government does intend to do rightly by the Irish people. (Cheers.) Therefore, looking on the session now drawing to a close, terrible as has been the work, long as have been the hours and the nights of its toil, often as we have been shocked by conduct in the House that has been distasteful and distracting to us, nevertheless I live in the hope that men will look back to the session of 1881, and will say that if we had the greatest of statesmen to guide our affairs, in that year was passed the greatest of measures in order to bring about tranquillity, peace, and union in the greatest empire on which the sun shines.’ (Loud cheers.)

The Land Bill having passed the Commons, its probable reception in the Lords caused much comment and excitement in the press and throughout the country. Their lordships, however, taking the statesmanlike view of the matter, did not reject the bill, but passed the second reading, and proceeded to discuss its provisions in Committee. At the instance of Lord Salisbury, the Conservative leader in the Upper House, and other peers, many amendments were made, and at one moment it appeared that the bill was in danger. The country began to manifest signs of agitation upon the subject, but the House of Commons having disagreed with the Lords’ amendments, which were considered vital to the existence of the bill, the Lords gave way, and the Land Bill became law on the 23rd of August.

Of this remarkable measure it may be said that its object is to give adequate security of possession to the Irish tenantry, at rents which are not excessive or unreasonable; and to give them also, by the free right of assignment or sale of their holdings, the value of

improvements made by them, which have hitherto in too many cases been absorbed by the owners of the soil. It is hoped by the Government which framed, and the Parliament which has passed, the Act, that the position of tenants will be made more secure, and that landlords will find in the increased security of their incomes a full compensation for any diminution of the powers or rights they have heretofore possessed.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

*LATER LIBERAL POLICY—1881-1887.*

Mr. Bright's Seventieth Birthday.—Address at Birmingham.—Government and the Closure Principle.—Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Bill.—Mr. Bright Retires from the Ministry.—Affairs in Egypt.—The Suez Canal.—Reform Conference at Leeds.—Mr. Bright at Keighley and Birmingham.—Opposes Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Policy.—Views on the Land Bill, International Arbitration, &c.



THE town of Rochdale presented a scene of unwonted excitement on the 16th of November 1881. It was Mr. Bright's seventieth birthday, and the event was celebrated with great enthusiasm by his townsmen, the day being observed as a general holiday. Addresses were presented from various parts of the kingdom, and the first which the popular tribune received was one from Manchester, the city that had once rejected him, and regretted it ever since. The address came from the Manchester Liberal Association, and Mr. Bright was much touched by this kindly message from some of his former constituents.

Not the least interesting presentation was one from the work-people in the employ of Messrs. Bright & Sons, which formed a pleasing refutation of the malicious slanders of Mr. Bright's political opponents as to the relations between master and workmen. In replying to the address, Mr. Bright took a retrospective glance at the history of the people, and said in conclusion: 'It is more than seventy years since my father established his business here, and I trust it may continue for another period as long, and with as great harmony and tranquillity, as we have witnessed during the past long period, I beg to thank you most kindly and most heartily for this

address, which I shall put with others of a like character ; but I can tell you truly that there is no address, from any part of the country, or from whatever people, that I shall value more than that which has been presented to me by you, my friends and neighbours, on this interesting and pleasant occasion.' An influential deputation from Birmingham presented to the right hon. gentleman a beautifully engrossed and kindly-worded address from his constituents ; and in replying to this mark of esteem Mr. Bright said, referring to his political labours : ' I doubt much whether they can be sustained very much longer after that time which King David spoke of as a sort of termination, if not of a man's life, at least of his labours. However, whether the time be long or short, whether it ends at the close of this Parliament or goes into another, of this you may be quite sure—that as long as I have memory to trace back what has taken place, as long as I have intelligence to judge the past and the present, my grateful feeling towards the constituency of Birmingham will never be lessened. It can hardly be increased ; and I hope to return by constant fidelity the trust and confidence which you have so long reposed in me.'

In the evening a great meeting of the inhabitants of Rochdale was held in the Town Hall. The large room was densely crowded. The Mayor, Mr. Ald. Baron, occupied the chair, and when Mr. Bright appeared there was cheering for some minutes, followed by the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'The fine old English gentleman.' An address, elaborately engrossed on vellum, having been presented, Mr. Bright responded in a lengthy oration, in the course of which he reviewed the past. Protection and the sufferings of the people and the farmers were first dealt with, and then he passed on to show what was the effect of free trade on agriculturists' wages. Reminiscences of the progress of the cotton trade, together with local allusions and a sketch of Rochdale's political history, brought a speech of an hour and a quarter's duration to a close. Letters and telegrams of congratulation from all the principal towns in the country were then read, after which the vast assembly dispersed. Rochdale was gaily decorated and brilliantly illuminated in the evening, and the day closed with a torchlight procession through the town.



Early in January 1882 Mr. Bright addressed his constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham. The condition of Ireland was such that a Coercion Act had become necessary, and in vindicating the measures of the Government Mr. Bright said that freedom could only flourish where law was paramount. He held that even in the disturbed districts the majority were in favour of peace and order, and attributed the recent outrages to agitators from America. Speaking again on January 5, he reviewed the respective functions of the two Houses of Parliament, expressed his belief that the Tory party would offer no desperate resistance to the extension of the county franchise, and declared a complete reform of the land laws to be of imperative necessity.

The Government having brought forward in the House of Commons a resolution to apply the principle of the closure by a bare majority, Mr. Bright opened the last night of the debate (March 30) with an important speech—which brought support to the Ministerialists—observing that, under existing rules, the difficulty of getting through the necessary business of the session was insuperable. He held that the resolution under discussion was not stringent enough rather than over-stringent, and the safeguards with which it was surrounded made it impossible that any injustice could be done in bringing to a close a debate which had been unduly prolonged. The Ministerial proposal would press less severely on small minorities than the two-thirds majority, while large minorities could take care of themselves, and would require no protection. The alarm of the Opposition he described as simulated, reminding them that they had expressed similar groundless alarms at the Repeal of the Corn-Laws, the Reform Bill of 1866, and on other occasions. He treated as a mere bugbear the suggestion that the Speaker would at any time lend himself to an improper use of his power; and in conclusion—pointing out that a certain portion of the Irish party, whose designs he illustrated by reference to the Chicago Convention, had declared war against the House of Commons, and had avowed their intention to make Government by Parliament impossible—he appealed to the Conservatives, whose patriotism he admitted, and to all other members, to assist the Government in

enabling Parliament to perform its duties. Eventually the Government proposal was carried by 318 to 279 votes.

As an important part of the Government legislation for Ireland, Mr. Gladstone introduced a bill dealing with the arrears of rent. The basis of the measure was the principle of compulsion and gift. Its operations were limited to holdings under £30 a year (Griffith's valuation), and only to such tenants as could show that their rent between November 1880 and November 1881 had been paid. The benefits of the bill would be alike open to landlord and tenant, the principle of compulsory purchase or sale being thus made equitable. The tribunal for all cases would be either the Land Commissioners' Court or the County Court. In cases where the claim was fully made out the State would pay one-half of the arrears accruing before November 1880, or one year's rent, by a free gift of the amount required. When both the tenant and the State had paid their respective contributions the whole of the remaining arrears would be cancelled, and the Courts would register the arrangements. To carry out the scheme about two millions might be required; of which the surplus of the Irish Church Fund would furnish three-fourths. If a further grant were required from Parliament, it would not exceed half a million. In supporting the motion to go into Committee on the Arrears Bill, Mr. Bright replied to the charge that it was a sop to discontent and agitation. He observed that the greatest sop of that kind which had ever yet been offered came from the Lords' Committee of this session, and it was one which, in some shape, the Opposition were understood to recommend. Respecting the comparative merits of the system of loans and gifts, he showed that if the rate of interest was very low there would be no check on an almost universal demand for advances, which would be 'shovelled out' wholesale to all and sundry; and instead of the plan costing two millions sterling, it would probably absorb five or six millions. The course now proposed was one infinitely preferable to that; and while admitting that there would be some difficulty in finding out who could pay their arrears and who could not, he stated that the Court would take every reasonable precaution to ascertain the real state of every applicant's affairs, and thus

guard against injustice to the State while effectually helping the tenant. In conclusion, he advised right hon. gentlemen on the other side to find some more suitable mode of exercising their powers as an Opposition than by endeavouring to make everything that was done for Ireland by the Government appear to be wrong, especially at a time when Ministers were entitled to the support of every loyal member of Parliament.

The Arrears Bill was discussed at great length in both Houses, but it eventually passed and became law.

In July 1882 considerable excitement was caused throughout the country by the announcement that Mr. Bright had retired from the Government. His resignation was caused by the position of affairs in Egypt. The Government had interfered by force of arms, and directed the bombardment of Alexandria. Mr. Gladstone denied that the Ministry were at war with Egypt, and stated that the measures taken at Alexandria were strictly measures of self-defence. Mr. Bright was opposed to the Government policy, however, and on the 15th resigned office. In justifying this step to the House of Commons, he said: 'I have no explanation to make; there seems nothing to explain, and I have nothing to defend. The simple fact is, that I could not agree with my late colleagues in the Government in their policy with regard to the Egyptian question. It has been said, Why have I not sooner left the Government? Why have I postponed it to this time? I may answer that, by saying that my profound regard for my right hon. friend at the head of the Government, and my regard also for those who now sit with him, have induced me to remain with them until the very last moment when I found it no longer possible to retain my office in the Cabinet. The fact is, that there was a disagreement to a large extent founded on principle; and now I may say, that if I had remained in office it must have been under these circumstances—either that I must have submitted silently to many measures which I myself altogether condemned, or I must have remained in office in constant conflict with my colleagues. Therefore it was better for them and better for me—the House, I am sure, will unanimously agree to that—that I should have asked my right hon.

friend to permit me to retire, and to place my resignation in the hands of the Queen. The House knows—many members, at any rate, who have had an opportunity of observing any of the facts of my political life know—that for forty years at least I have endeavoured to teach my countrymen an opinion and a doctrine which I hold—namely, that the moral law is intended not only for individual life, but for the life and practice of States in their dealings with one another. I think that in the present case there has been a manifest violation both of international law and of the moral law, and therefore it is impossible for me to give my support to it. I cannot repudiate what I have preached and taught during the period of a rather long political life. I cannot turn my back upon myself, and deny all that I have taught to many thousands of others during the forty years that I have been permitted at public meetings and in this House to address my countrymen. Only one word more. I asked my calm judgment and my conscience what was the part I ought to take. They pointed it out to me, as I think, with an unerring finger, and I am endeavouring to follow it.'

Mr. Bright's retirement elicited feelings of universal regret, which Mr. Gladstone gave expression to, adding that while he agreed with his late colleague on the question of the moral law, he only differed from him in this particular application of it.

The Suez Canal question occupied a good deal of attention in 1883, and Mr. Bright dealt with it at length in a speech delivered on the 14th of June, at the Birmingham Commemoration. He traced the history of the famous Lesseps Canal, as well as the revolution it had effected in British commerce, and in the ideas of British merchants. When originally proposed, he remarked, not a single Chamber of Commerce throughout the country offered to subscribe a five-pound note to the project, and it was by the strenuous and unassisted energies of the French that it had been constructed. 'If there is to be a new canal,' he continued, 'we must do one of two things. We must either act with France or against France. I should not say against; but with the policy of the last year in Egypt, the English policy, as was inevitable, created great irritation in the neighbouring country; and if, after the course they have taken' in

regard to this canal—their enterprise, their outlay of capital, their great success—we are to say, “Now, having got possession of this country, we will have a canal of our own, we will have no further connection with M. de Lesseps’ canal,” then, I think, a strain would be put upon the cordial friendship that now for so many years has existed between the two countries, which would be at least highly undesirable, if it would not be highly dangerous. The Government and the Foreign Office have been appealed to. I do not think I can doubt what will be the course that Lord Granville and his colleagues will take. I am quite sure he will endeavour by all the means in his power to support that only which is judicious—judicious for all nations, and friendly and considerate to France—and will not allow the shipowners and the speculators and the men of great enterprise to dictate what shall be the course of the Government with regard to the matter. Protracted negotiations took place between the French and English Governments on the subject of the canal, but ultimately they were for the time being abandoned.

A great Reform Conference was held at Leeds on the 17th of October. It was attended by upwards of 2500 delegates, representing 500 Liberal Associations in all parts of the kingdom, and was presided over by Mr. John Morley. Resolutions were passed in favour of the extension of household suffrage to the counties, the abolition of Parliamentary oaths, the provision of a better system of registration, &c. Mr. Bright was a delegate to the Conference, but took no active part in its deliberations. At a subsequent meeting, however, over which he presided, he cordially endorsed the resolutions, and took the opportunity of expressing his views on the subjects of minority members and the uses of the House of Lords. The former point he regarded as a trick invented by the House of Lords for robbing the great towns of their legitimate power, their twelve members having no more weight than fourteen returned by unimportant constituencies. In reforming the House of Lords, Mr. Bright said he would deprive that body of the right to reject any bill which had twice been sent up to it by the Commons, thus greatly curtailing the power of compromise, which under the existing system, the House of Lords exercised with but slight scruple

when dealing with bills in which the Liberal majority in the House of Commons had a strong interest.

Towards the close of the year, in a speech delivered at Keighley (December 14), Mr. Bright expressed his belief that the House of Lords would prefer to force a dissolution on the Redistribution proposals of the Government than on the Franchise Bill, and that the assimilation of the borough and county franchise might therefore become law after a show of opposition. But on the question of forty-shilling freeholders, and on property qualifications in general, Mr. Bright was not so far advanced as many members of the Liberal party. Replying to the taunt that he was becoming Conservative in his old age, he said, 'that the English constitution was not based on, and never aimed at, the principle of universal suffrage; and that the desire of every reformer, who was not at heart a revolutionist, should be to enlarge as far as possible the existing basis of the constitution, and not to substitute some alien foundation.' On the question of the representation of minorities he was, as ever, convinced that the 'unicorn' system at present in partial use was un-English and unjust; and he held that it would be preferable to elect on one list the full number of members to which each town or county might be entitled rather than to divide it into wards or districts with one or more members for each division.

On the 29th of January 1884 Mr. Bright addressed his constituents at Birmingham, dealing chiefly with the proposed Reform Bill. He described the Conservative speeches during the recess as extravagant and virulent attacks upon the Government, the virulence being the greater the higher in society the grade of the speakers, so that when they who spoke were the brothers and sons of dukes their language was the most coarse and ungentlemanly of all. With the view of showing that the Conservatives were undeserving the confidence of the nation, he argued that they were still as antagonistic to the rights of the people as they were when they opposed the abolition of the Corn-Laws and the paper-duty, and tried to prevent a treaty of commerce with France and an extension of the franchise. They now gave no promise of penitence or amendment, and he urged the working men of England to exclude them from power for

ever. In a second speech on the following day Mr. Bright exposed the fallacies underlying Mr. Henry George's scheme for the nationalisation of the land, the outcome of which, if logically applied, would be to make the Chancellor of the Exchequer the sole land-owner. To accept such a scheme the people of England, he declared, must have lost not only all their common-sense, but all reverence for the Ten Commandments. He maintained that if the sale of land were only free, that is, liberated from the laws of primogeniture and settlement, intended to agglomerate estates, the forces of dispersion, the principal of which is the desire for larger interest, would beat the forces of accumulation, and land would again fall into many hands. He would make the transfer of land perfectly simple, just as the transfer of a ship or other exceedingly valuable property is simple, and would in case of intestacy have some law for fair division among children.

When the new Franchise Bill came before the House of Commons, Mr. Bright took part in the debate on the second reading, and condemned the Conservative amendment as a repetition of the tactics of 1866. If a dissolution intervened between this bill and redistribution, it would be the fault of the Opposition. With regard to Ireland, Mr. Bright warmly defended the proposal to retain for that country its existing quota of members.

The Reform proposals were ardently discussed from different standpoints at numerous public meetings throughout the country. In July there was a great Liberal demonstration in the Pomona Gardens, Manchester, addressed by Lord Hartington and Mr. Bright. The latter described the persistent opposition of the House of Lords to previous Reform Bills, urged that it was the duty of those present to join with the rest of their countrymen in compelling a House representing directly nobody to accept a bill which had been passed and granted by a House representing some millions. At Birmingham, on the 4th of August, Mr. Bright made the severest attack upon the House of Lords he had ever yet done, tracing the evil effects of its action from 1760 to 1830. He said that he saw no remedy more moderate than the abolition of the Lords' veto, which he would make only a suspensive veto, so that

they should not be allowed to reject again a measure twice passed by the Commons.

In addressing his constituents at Birmingham on the 29th of January 1885, Mr. Bright made it clearly manifest that his views on some points were not in accord with those of the new and advanced school of Radicals. Having appealed to the people to make the elections of 1886 as remarkable a starting-point for a better policy as had been the elections of 1832 and 1868, he expressed his doubts whether the question of the Disestablishment of the English Church would be ripe in the next Parliament. Then he addressed himself more especially to those who advocated or supported the demand for increased naval and military expenditure. He declared that the recent 'scare' about the navy was as devoid of reason as any preceding panic, and regarded the idea of a war with France as the most unlikely chance in the whole range of European politics, and one which no Frenchman outside a lunatic asylum looked upon as possible. For himself, he was thankful that the 'Manchester school' was not dead, for with it morality and Christianity would be dead also. The Victorian era, however, had profited but little by its teachings, for during the Queen's reign the Government had spent on war one hundred and fifty millions of money, and had sacrificed from 60,000 to 80,000 of their fellow-subjects. Mr. Bright next went on to deprecate the constant cry of certain sections of the press for more colonies, and declared an ever-growing empire to be, in his opinion, a delusion and a snare, imperial federation childish and absurd, and the Colonial Board of Advice a great evil, as shown by the Indian Council, which all Governors-General of India, and many Secretaries of State and Cabinet Ministers, thought might be abolished with great advantage. He considered that the true policy of England was not to enlarge her empire. 'Let us be content,' said Mr. Bright in conclusion, 'with the territory we have and with the regions we govern. Let us deal with all people as we would wish them to deal with us. Let us suppress the longings and hungerings for more territory; let us resent the irritating and offensive teachings of hysterical members of the press; and let the time come when, as I think one of our poets has said, "where



Britain's power is felt mankind may feel her mercy too." I would say, in addition, that where Britain's power is felt, there also may evermore be felt the justice and moderation of her character—that those great qualities may be everywhere manifest and by all nations acknowledged.'

Mr. Bright's address was warmly received by his constituents, but the press at large criticised it adversely, many Liberal organs admitting that he was out of touch with modern Radicalism, and that his views of imperial federation were erroneous and dogmatic.

The appearances of the right hon. gentleman in public were now few and far between, but on the 24th of July he attended a banquet given to Lord Spencer, late Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Lord Hartington presided, and Mr. Bright, in the course of an eloquent testimony to the ex-Viceroy, as one of the most noble and most honoured statesmen of our day, denounced as disloyal to the Crown and directly hostile to Great Britain those who, pretending to represent Ireland, had assailed Lord Spencer and the judges with an insolence never before equalled. Four days later Mr. Callan brought Mr. Bright's speech before the House of Commons as a breach of privilege. A warm debate ensued, which revealed peculiar changes of view on the part of some speakers in reference to Irish questions, and in the end Mr. Callan's motion was rejected by 154 to 23 votes.

The year 1886 was painfully memorable for Mr. Bright's separation from the great Liberal leader, whose policy in general, and Irish policy in particular, he had warmly supported for so many years. Mr. Gladstone having brought forward two important legislative measures for Ireland—a bill for securing Home Rule and a Land Purchase Bill—the Ministry were defeated on their Government of Ireland Bill by 343 votes to 313. This defeat was the result of a combination between Liberal dissentients and the Conservatives. The Prime Minister thereupon appealed to the country, and the united Conservative and Liberal Unionist forces being greatly in the majority after the elections, Mr. Gladstone resigned office, and Lord Salisbury became Premier.

During the progress of the electoral contest Mr. Bright addressed

his constituents of the Central Division of Birmingham. He declined to pledge himself to the principle of the Home Rule Bill, on the ground that it might be innocent or most dangerous, according as it should be explained or insisted on in future bills. 'I cannot give any such pledge,' said the right hon. gentleman. 'The experience of the past three months does not increase my confidence in the wisdom of the Administration, or of their policy with respect to the future government of Ireland. We have before us a principle which is not explained by its authors or its supporters. I firmly disapprove of the existence of two legislative assemblies in the United Kingdom, believing that no Irish Parliament can be as powerful and as just in Ireland as the united Parliament sitting in Westminster. My six years' experience of the Irish party, of their language in the House of Commons, and of their deeds in Ireland, makes it impossible for me to consent to hand over to them the property and the rights of four millions of the Queen's subjects, our countrymen in Ireland. At least two millions of them are as loyal as the population of your town, and I will be no party to a measure which will thrust them from the generosity and justice of the united and Imperial Parliament.' Mr. Bright further wrote a letter in support of the candidature of Mr. Caine, a prominent Radical Unionist, for Barrow. In this letter, which was widely quoted as the opinion of its distinguished writer on the great question of the day, Mr. Bright said: 'It is not pleasant to see how unforgiving some of our heretofore Liberal friends are if their representatives refuse to surrender judgment and conscience to the demands or the sudden changes of their political leader. The action of our clubs and associations is rapidly engaged in making delegates of their members, and in insisting on their forgetting all principles if the interests of a party or the leader of a party are supposed to be at stake. What will be the value of party when its whole power is laid at the disposal of a leader from whose authority no appeal is allowed? At this moment it is notorious that scores of members of the House of Commons have voted with the Government who in private have condemned the Irish Bills.'

Mr. Bright's secession from the bulk of the Liberal party had its

effect about this time in one of those Conservative quarters where formerly his name was bitterly traduced. At the commemoration at Oxford, on the 30th of June, he received the degree of Honorary D.C.L. Mr. Bright was eminently deserving of this honour, but in the heyday of his fame as an orator and a statesman it had not been conferred upon him.

On the 1st of July Mr. Bright again addressed his constituents at Birmingham, strongly condemning both the Home Rule scheme and the Land Purchase scheme. This speech called forth a letter from Mr. Gladstone, who denied having successfully concealed his thoughts on the Irish question in the previous November, seeing that he had expressly stated, that if the Irish elections went as was expected, the magnitude of the question would throw all others into the shade. Mr. Gladstone also pointed out that the position in Ireland had wholly changed from what it was in 1881, when there was a conspiracy for marching through rapine to the disintegration of the United Kingdom. The right hon. gentleman also denied that he had endeavoured to thrust the details of the Land Purchase Bill upon his colleagues and upon the House of Commons. 'If I am a man capable of such an intention, I wonder you ever took office with one so ignorant of the spirit of the constitution and so arbitrary in his character. Though this appears to be your opinion of me, I do not think it is the opinion held by my countrymen in general. You quote not a word in support of your charge. It is absolutely untrue.'

In his reply Mr. Bright said that the Liberal leader had asked the constituencies to send him a Liberal majority large enough to make him independent of Mr. Parnell and his party, and yet he had since completely surrendered to Mr. Parnell. With regard to the Land Bill, he thought that its owner's friends and opponents, and the country, had a right to know his intentions on so great a matter. In concluding, Mr. Bright remarked: 'Though I thus differ from you at this time and on this question, do not imagine that I can ever cease to admire your great qualities or to value the great services you have rendered to your country.'

Although Mr. Bright has recently made but few appearances

upon public platforms, his advice has constantly been sought on a variety of subjects by innumerable correspondents. Now we find him condemning the rigid enforcement of the compulsory clauses of the Vaccination Acts; on another occasion he expresses an opinion adverse to the payment of members of Parliament, on the ground that he does not wish to make Parliamentary life a trade; while in several instances he has written letters to Unionist correspondents explanatory of his present political position. On some of these matters the majority of his countrymen differ from him; but it is pleasant, in closing this chapter, to present him as the consistent advocate of peace amongst the nations. Writing to the Rev. W. Jones, an English delegate to the Peace Conference at Chicago, he recommended the adoption of a permanent Arbitration Treaty between England and the United States. On the 31st of October 1887 a meeting of representative Englishmen and Americans was held in the American Exhibition buildings at Kensington, to consider the question of international arbitration as the most natural tribunal for the settlement of disputes between the two great English-speaking nations. The Marquis of Lorne presided. Mr. Bright was unable to be present, but he wrote a letter warmly sympathising with the object of the meeting. 'The treaty which it is intended to promote between the two nations,' he observed, 'is one in which the whole civilised world is deeply interested, and I hope it may receive favourable consideration from the American Government and from our own. If accepted and completed it will prove a great step in advance in the direction of a general disarmament, and will do much to relieve mankind from the sore burden of the great armies and navies, which, as they now exist, are a discredit and a constant danger to all the professing Christian nations of the globe.' Every one would rejoice to see the United States and England marching together in this great and peaceful campaign, whose bloodless victories would do more for humanity than all the wars which have afflicted humanity since the foundation of the world.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

*MR. BRIGHT'S ORATORY.—GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.*

Personal Characteristics of Mr. Bright.—His Oratory.—Its Power and Quality.—Its Freshness, &c.—Comparison with Mr. Gladstone.—Mr. Bright's Knowledge of Literature.—His Humour.—Examples.—Recreations.—Moral Characteristics.—His Courage and Earnestness.—Mr. Bright as an Agitator.—The true Seer in English Politics.—His Career and its Objects.—The Friend of true Liberty.—Influence upon his Time.—Conclusion.



WE have now reached the close of our survey of Mr. Bright's career. Something still remains to be said, however, concerning the personal characteristics of this leader of the people; and our observations shall not pass beyond those fair and legitimate bounds which should be observed when men speak of those whose long services to their country have not touched their final limit. The substantial life-work of Mr. Bright has been achieved; on the 16th of November last he completed his seventy-sixth year—thus passing by six years, according to the great Hebrew king, the allotted span of human life; but, notwithstanding this, we will still hope that for many years to come he may be a living force amongst us, and a grace and an ornament to the British Senate.

When the name of Mr. Bright is mentioned, one of our first reflections is occupied with his oratory. And in this respect, as regards its power and influence, there is but one other public man comparable with him, namely, Mr. Gladstone. All other Parliamentary speakers are at an immeasurable distance from these. It is not that in every aspect Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone are superior to Lord Beaconsfield and some other of their contemporaries;

they have doubtless been excelled in certain individual gifts and qualities, but in all those characteristics which combine to make the great orator, their superiority has been manifest. Mr. Bright, too, has been favoured by nature for the work he has had to do. Though not of imposing stature, his form and bearing are such as to create at once an impression in his favour. Robust in figure, and with a fine, genial, Saxon face, his very glance has been sufficient to fix his audience. Like Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, 'he holds us with his glittering eye;' and that eye, which is of a deep blue, can now flash with indignation, and now beam with the soft light of sympathy. His broad face, high, full forehead, and mobile mouth are all in keeping with the oratory which is so characteristic of him. His voice is—or was in its meridian strength—remarkably clear and of great compass, reaching a mass of fifteen thousand persons almost as easily as it could address itself to a hundred and fifty. The speech itself is always singularly clear and vivid, now rippling with humour, now impregnated with earnestness and pathos. As one critic has observed, 'his diction is drawn exclusively from the pure wells of English undefiled. Milton and the Bible are his unceasing study. There was a time when it was rare to find him without *Paradise Lost* in his hand or in his pocket. The use of Scriptural imagery is a marked feature of his orations, and no imagery can be more appropriately employed to illustrate his views; for Mr. Bright, in all his grand efforts, rises far above the loaded, unwholesome atmosphere of party politics into the purer air and brighter skies of patriotism and philanthropy. We may differ about his means or measures, but no one can differ about the aim, when he puts forth his strength to raise Ireland, or India, in the scale of civilisation, to mitigate the evils of war, or to promote the spread of toleration and Christian charity throughout the world.' Mr. Bright can speak extempore, and with much incisiveness on such occasions—as witness one of his speeches during the Crimean war; but his finest efforts are prepared. In common with all the great ancient and modern orators, he devotes time and care to the preparation of his speeches on all those occasions when the subject is worthy of his powers; but the great charm of his oratory is that, although his matter is

prepared, it is given with a freshness and warmth of colouring which make it appear spontaneous.

He has much fancy and vivacity; and his universal sympathies invest his speeches with a wide and permanent claim upon the world's attention. As compared with Mr. Gladstone, who has all the treasures of classical lore at his command, he lacks comprehensiveness and variety in treatment. But those who are in the habit of assuming that Mr. Bright's knowledge of the literature of his own country is confined almost exclusively to Shakespeare and Milton—with of course a profound knowledge of the Bible—commit a grievous error. There is scarcely an English poet, or a writer of prose, with whose works he is not largely familiar; and he can draw at will and with facility from this great storehouse of intellectual wealth. For a generation back, the House of Commons always filled immediately the news reached the lobbies that Mr. Bright was 'up.' He had always something to say, and in this respect he may be imitated with advantage by younger and more garrulous speakers. The great art of legislative oratory is to have something to say, and to know when to say it. Let these conditions be observed, and the House will speedily recognise its duty, and will listen. The simplicity of Mr. Bright's language is another point worthy of note: he has shown the mighty but neglected power of words of one syllable; and thus, while enlisting the attention of the most intellectual and the refined, he at the same time secures a still larger audience amongst the masses. It has been well remarked that his natural gifts have been both modified and expanded by study, and that in his eloquence he goes to the primary roots of things: he gets hold of eternal principles. Facts occupy a subordinate position in his oratory; but they are always at command, and whenever they are used, they have the awkward merit for his opponents of being perfectly irrefragable.

Mr. Bright is unquestionably a fine humourist. His humour is of that rich and mellow kind which pervades the pages of the quaint old writers. Lord Beaconsfield, when provoked, was a master of sarcasm; Lord Sherborne, when goaded by stupidity or what he regards as prejudice, can call into exercise a power which, like the lightning, has a withering and blasting influence; but neither

of these statesmen, nor indeed any other public speaker of our time, with the exception perhaps of Mr. Spurgeon, has the same full, genial, and flowing humour. Take some examples of this. There have been few happier strokes of Parliamentary humour in our time than Mr. Bright's comparison between Lord Beaconsfield and the quack at the country fair, who sold pills which were good against earthquakes. To an observation that the ancestors of a particular gentleman had come over with the Conqueror, he replied that they never did anything else. Then there was the comparison of Mr. Lowe and Mr. Horsman to a Scotch terrier; the epithet of the Adullamites; and the description of Mr. Disraeli as the 'mystery man' of the Ministry. The reader will find the numerous speeches given in the course of this work prolific in examples of humour.

As regards other personal characteristics, it may be mentioned that Mr. Bright is as earnest in his pleasures as he has been in his work. He is passionately fond of the country, and especially of the grand scenery with which the Scotch Highlands abound. He can, as is well known, throw a fly with any one, and wait with a patience as exemplary for the fish to rise. In his younger days he was a proficient swimmer; and as far as indoor recreations are concerned, he can play a more than creditable game at billiards. His love of humanity needs no insisting upon; but he has also a great affection for the animal creation—dogs being his special favourites. He has that devoutness so highly esteemed by the poet, which consists in loving 'all things both great and small.'

But we are more immediately concerned with his moral characteristics. Who can but admire his unswerving advocacy of the principles of individual and national justice, duty, and righteousness? The just have no fear; and his motto, 'Be just, and fear not,' indicates the spirit in which he has always endeavoured to act. We may apply to him the words which Shakespeare makes Cominius utter respecting that noble Roman, Coriolanus:—

'It is held  
That valour is the chiefest virtue, and  
Most dignifies the haver; if it be,  
The man I speak of cannot in the world  
Be singly counterpoised.'



Even his enemies admire the moral courage of Mr. Bright ; it is a valour that is both unmistakable and ennobling. It is his very devotion to the right which has led to the charge of intolerance being brought against him. But his intolerance is only the intolerance against wrong. He has a large and catholic nature, but he revolts against insincerity and buffoonery in politics. He thinks the right should be seen at once always, and is impatient when it is not perceived, or wilfully obscured. His sternness and intolerance are but those strong virtues which distinguish all reformers. The Puritans were stern, and in the eyes of the Cavaliers the most intolerant race upon the face of the earth ; but they lived in stern times, and had stern work to do. So as regards Mr. Bright. When he began public life there were many abuses to be rectified, and that hydra-headed monster, Monopoly, required to be hurled down and destroyed. This was not work to be accomplished in kid gloves ; it required men of earnest purpose, strong wills, and large hearts ; and these were forthcoming in Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and other leaders who fought by their side.

It has further been charged against Mr. Bright that he has been an agitator. He admits the impeachment ; for it is one into which no element of shame or regret can enter. Agitation has at certain periods in our history—even in the present century—been absolutely necessary for the prosperity and the very safety of England. The agitators for slavery emancipation, Catholic emancipation, Free Trade, Reform, and other social and political measures affecting Great Britain and Ireland, did great and noble work. The agitator who divines the real instincts of a people, and judiciously guides their movements to fruition, is one who, call him by whatsoever name we will, is the world's benefactor. Such men perceive the dangers ahead, and are the true pilots in extremity.

The name of Mr. Bright has in certain circles been used as a name wherewith to alarm the timid, and to kindle their prejudices. It has been put forward as a bugbear to frighten people with. The charge is already beginning to excite the derision of those who dive beneath the surface of politics. If sagacity and foresight are titles to statesmanship, then is Mr. Bright a true statesman. For more than a

generation he has been the true seer in English politics. He has nearly always been in the right. When we turn for a moment to the great questions of the last forty years—questions affecting Free Trade, India, Ireland, Russia, the American War, the *Alabama* Arbitration, Parliamentary Reform, Church-rates, &c.,—and remember that in regard to them Mr. Bright has been in advance of his age,—our attitude towards him must perforce be that of admiration and gratitude, not of criticism and censure. His political career has been one long struggle for the overthrow of fallacies and disabilities. So far from being a revolutionist, he claims to be a good Conservative. And in the sense that he is the true Conservative who amends in order to preserve, he is right. Mr. Bright has cut deep into the wounds of the body corporate in order to restore it to health. The commonwealth could only be saved by probing it to its innermost depths. This is the logical defence of Mr. Bright's Liberal yet truly Conservative policy.

The most substantial virtue of a country is in its great men; and if that be so, as we are assured, let us not withhold the honour that is due to them. Greatness in the political world may be independent of politics; it is so in Mr. Bright's case. With whatever side of the House of Commons he had been led to identify himself, he must have added one more illustrious name to the roll of that party. He has preferred morality and justice to all the peerages and all the dynasties that ever existed in the world. Yet although he has ever been the chosen favourite of the democracy, it has been from no unworthy pandering to the passions of the multitude. He has not scrupled to correct their errors, and has educated them in order to raise them. Liberty, as Daniel Webster said, is not lawless. 'It demands checks; it seeks for guards; it insists on securities; it entrenches itself behind strong defences, and fortifies itself with all possible care against the assaults and ambition of passion.' This is the liberty for which Mr. Bright has striven—not the liberty of license, as some have falsely alleged. He has exhibited a manly resistance to all forms of oppression and evil for conscience' sake; but at the same time he has never attempted to uproot the bonds of society; on the contrary, it has been one of

his chief ends and desires to harmonise the various classes of his countrymen, not to throw society into disorder, disruption, and anarchy.

If we mistake not, the verdict of history upon Mr. Bright and his career will be such as to warrant our applying to him the words of Antony when speaking his valedictory words upon the great Cæsar :

‘The elements  
So mix’d in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, “This was a man !”’

The social and political condition of England has been greatly changed since Mr. Bright entered upon public life ; but notwithstanding all these radical reforms—may we not rather say in consequence of them?—the public institutions of the country are more stable, more firmly rooted, than they have ever been ; while the loyalty and affection of the people towards the Sovereign of these realms have suffered no diminution.

We cannot expect, perhaps, to retain long amongst us the great survivors of that noble band of reformers who have rendered the past two generations so distinguished in our political annals. When we look forward into the future, also, it is difficult to perceive those who, amongst the rising statesmen of the time, may be capable of wearing the armour of Achilles ; but we console ourselves with the reflection that in all times of crisis England has found her master minds. The career of one such we have endeavoured to trace ; and so long as virtue, courage, and patriotism retain their significance, so long will these noble qualities continue to be associated with the name of John Bright. He takes rank with the Pym, the Hampdens, the Miltons, and other incorruptible great men of the past, who, in times of difficulty and of peril, have unswervingly fought the battle of freedom, and asserted the liberties of England.

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